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SIMPLY WOMEN

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Selections from the works of
MARCEL PRÉVOST

Translated by
R. I. BRANDON-VAUVILLEZ

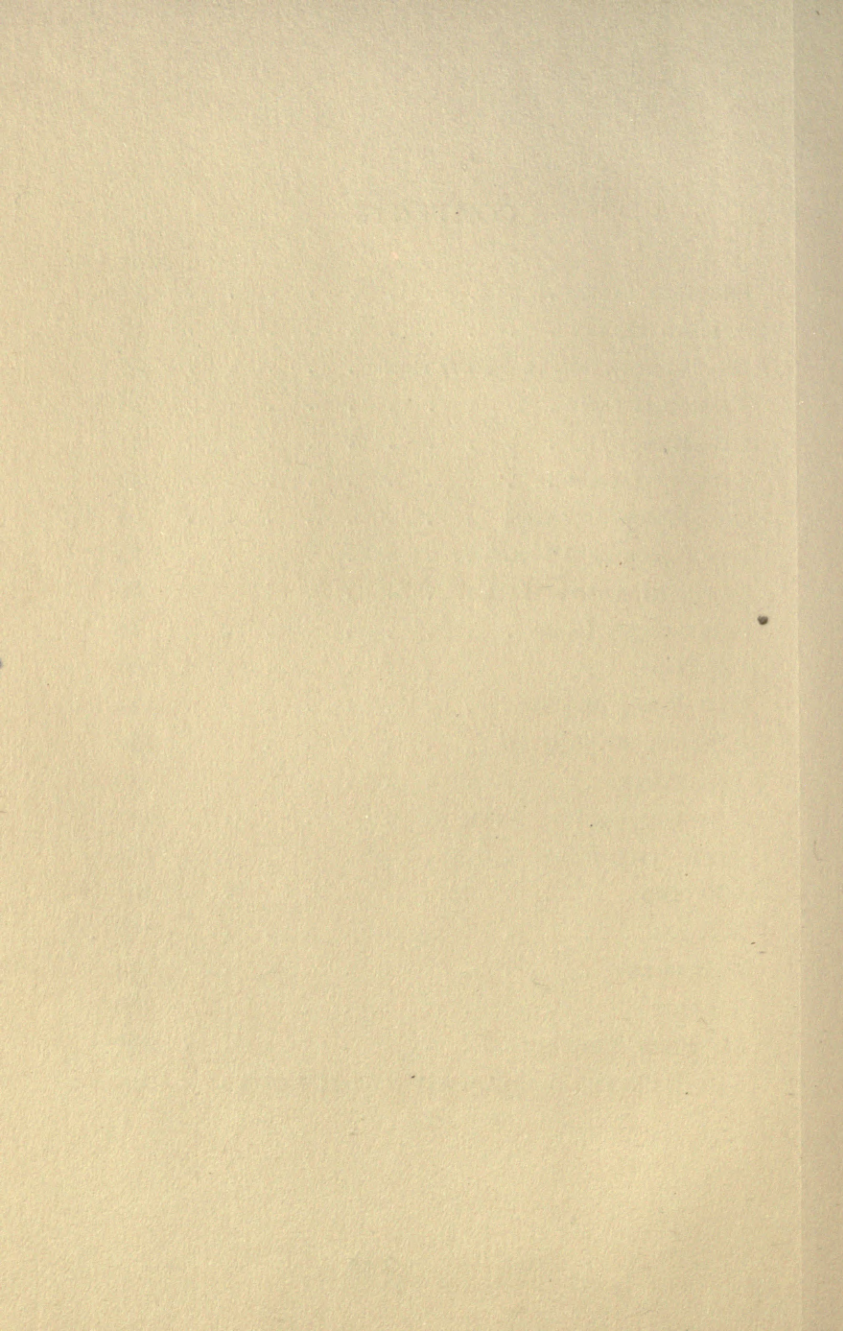


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SIMPLY WOMEN

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BROTHER JACK
(*Mon. frère Jacques*)

Madame veuve Laroche-Thiébault
To Madame d'Éprun :

WHAT is happening at Bourges, dear Colette? What is going on amongst our friends? Is our small little set still scandalizing the virtuous bourgeois of Bourges with its madcap doings? No matter how laboriously we are trying to appear fast and pretending we are living the Parisian life we cannot escape from the fact that we are still in the melancholic town of Bourges, asleep in the shadow of its cathedral.

I was so very tired of our good old town that, unable to endure it for another minute, I took the express for Paris without saying a word to any one. Long live the freedom of widowhood!

However, I will be frank with you—being bored was not the only reason why I went away. I had been imprudent enough to grant a rendezvous for the next day at my own house to Captain d'Exiles.

From a distance it seemed very pleasant, but when it came to the point of doing, why—I'd much rather go to hear a sermon. We are all a little like that!

As the train was carrying me away towards Paris I found myself laughing like a schoolgirl at the thought of Exiles coming to my house, carefully perfumed, his hair curled, ready to conquer. I pictured at the same time the mischievous face of my maid Solange saying to him: "Madame begged me to tell the *Capitaine* that she was very sorry—Madame was obliged to go to Paris on important business concerning her brother—family affairs—you know——"

And I could even hear in imagination the "*Sacré nom d—*" of the captain on his way back to the barracks.

The company of M. d'Exiles will have a very uncomfortable time for a few days while manœuvring.

Solange's story is partly true. I went to my brother's apartment when I reached Paris, having previously sent him a telegram to expect me at about eleven P. M., and it was about eleven-thirty when I rang his door bell.

Jack has a very comfortable apartment on the ground floor, *Rue des Écuries d'Artois*, which is wonderfully furnished. One per-

ceives at once the hand of a woman, perhaps of several.

Well, Jack was dressing for supper. He was carefully tying his cravat under the supervision of his valet.

"What the deuce brings you to Paris so suddenly?" he said to me.

"Dear Jack," I replied. "Do not scold me! I was bored to death at Bourges."

"Truly! Bourges is not very amusing twelve months in the year—but you really do not intend to stay here to-night, I hope?" "Yes, for to-night. To-morrow I'll get settled elsewhere."

Jack seemed very much embarrassed. Evidently my arrival was very inopportune. However, as he is very nice and very fond of his younger sister, he pretended to be pleased.

"Very well, I'll give the order to have my room prepared for you. I'll go and spend the night with a friend. Only, I am sorry, but I must leave you alone for supper."

"Oh, Jack! I was so happy. I have just arrived, and you are going to leave me!"

"I cannot have you with me," said he. "I am going where young widows are not allowed."

His valet had discreetly retired. I went to Jack and smilingly said:

"You are going to have supper with ladies?"

"Exactly."

"Gentlemen and ladies?"

"One man only. You do not know him. He is a nobleman I met in Bucharest—Count Ildescu."

"Who are the women?"

"Lucienne d'Argenson, Fanny Love, and the beautiful Cordoba. I know I am not going to enjoy myself. The women bore me to death. Ildescu is wild to know them, and I am introducing him to all three at once in order to be done with it. He'll leave me in peace after that."

"Well—take me with you!"

I gave Jack no time to protest, but sat upon his knee, and with much petting explained to him that I, too, felt like Ildescu; that Bourges was as bad as Bucharest; that like him I was wild to see Fanny Love, Lucienne d'Argenson—the beautiful Cordoba.

"It is perfectly absurd. Suppose you should be seen?"

"I'll wear a thick veil until we get in the private dining-room. There will be no danger after that. Neither your friend nor the women know me."

"They might say awful things."

"Surely, I am no prude!—Well, if they go too far, you can take me away."

In short, as it was getting near dinner time and as I would not give in, Jack finally consented. It

was agreed that I was to play the rôle of a friend of Jack's making my début in Paris.

I had in my trunk a pretty, stylish evening dress. I put it on. Jack played maid. He was beginning to enter into the zest of the thing.

"By Jove," he said, when I was ready, "you are a great deal better looking than the geese we are going to see. Ildescu will lose his head. Be careful. He is dangerous."

The supper was to be served at Joseph's at one o'clock. Fanny Love and the beautiful Cordoba were not able to come until after the theatre, Comte Ildescu was to bring Lucienne d'Argenson. We were the last to arrive and were fifteen minutes late.

Oh, dear Colette! you should have seen the look those three women gave me when my brother introduced me as Mademoiselle Renée de Châtel-lerault, who had come to Paris to stay. Men never paid me compliments that pleased me as well as the pout from those three pretty faces—for they *are* charming—the creatures.

I was also very much flattered to see the angry flash of their eyes as they realized I was as pretty as they were—they criticised my dress. I could hear them making fun of it—while Ildescu, already very much smitten, was showering attentions on me. Truly they were

much better dressed, in better taste and more elegantly.

We sat down at the table. My place was between Ildescu and Mlle. d'Argenson. I drank two glasses of champagne as quickly as I could to ease my conscience, after which I felt ready for anything.

We spoke of the theatres. Fanny Love and the beautiful Cordoba gave us their impressions on contemporary dramatic art. They seemed much better informed and hardly as silly as the women of our aristocratic set. Lucienne d'Argenson gave us sketches on society, upon the life of the *mondains*—upon the reduction of revenues. For instance, she said: "In two years there will be no more rich people left in Paris," etc. I remembered having heard the same opinion expressed by the wife of the Treasurer. Jack listened gravely and replied accordingly. Ildescu, instead of listening, began to whisper in my ear all sorts of foolish nonsense, quite a different kind from that we hear from the men of our set, meanwhile looking at me admiringly.

"Well," I thought, "this supper is quite proper! Evidently the women do not feel at home with me. They must think I am silly and provincial—I am going to make them feel more at ease."

I drank another glass of champagne and began

telling the pretty adventure you told us so successfully the other night at the colonel's dinner—the story of the *Confetti Révélateur*. Ah, Colette! I wish you could have seen the faces of the three women. They affected not to hear. “Oh,” they haughtily whispered when I got through! Jack, his face quite red, thought it was his duty to apologize for me to his neighbor. “You know she is quite green—later on she'll know better.” Ildescu was laughing heartily.

“Ah, very funny!—very funny!—Most amusing! Most Parisian!” he said. “She is adorable!” and his knee tried to enter into conversation with mine under the table. However, I do not like to have a man take such liberties, especially without my permission, but said to myself: “Evidently the situation demands it. If I show what I feel they will guess at once that I am not what I pretend to be.” Suddenly the shrill voice of Fanny Love was heard saying, at the same time striking roughly poor Jack's hand with her fan:

“Look here! I'll thank you for not tearing my dress with your feet! Where do you think you are? At Châtellerault?”

“At Châtellerault!” I understood. This was aimed at me directly.

Supper ended almost in silence. Lucienne and the beautiful Cordoba kept the conversation going.

They spoke about gold mines. At half-past two we left the restaurant. The three women bade me good-by in a very stiff way. Cabs were ready. Ildescu wanted to come with me.

"Hold on, my dear," said Jack, "I am going to see madame home."

Poor Roumanian *comte*. He looked so sad that I allowed him to squeeze my hands as we parted.

Once alone in Jack's coupé I angrily said to him:

"You cannot make me believe that your suppers are always like this one! You call that having a good time! You must have told them who I am. It is outrageous! If you hadn't I would have had such a good time!"

"I give you my word of honor," said Jack, "that all our suppers are like this one. From time to time some one quarrels. Some one has hysterics. That's the most interesting part—otherwise they are just like this one. Not very amusing, are they, but we must pass away the evening."

"Surely they are not always as proper, the women? I suppose that in the privacy of——"

"Ah," replied Jack, smiling, "truly in the intimacy of—it is quite different. However, intimacy for them means work—work for which they are paid. They will not work for nothing when it is time for them to rest. Love, you see, for such women is their stock in trade."

This last remark of my brother was not without depth. I meditated over it after I retired and you may be sure, dear Colette, that my meditations were extremely moral. Really, it is anything but funny to be compelled to make love to any one, say for instance like Ildescu, with whom you have had supper.

Poor women! To think we envy their apparently gay life. How well I understand now their desire to play the part of being good and proper for a change, just as we sometimes pretend we are all *cocottes* whenever we have the leisure.

I shall be back home on Tuesday next. Do announce my arrival to the captain. He is much preferable to the Roumanian. I want to tell you that I found while looking over the personals in the morning paper the following:

"Young man; rich; who dined with a delicious woman from Châutellerault, is dying to see her again—I."

"I" is Ildescu.

Of the four of us, Fanny Love, Cordoba, d'Argenson and myself, I, the amateur, had won Ildescu.

A KIND HEART

(*Bon Cœur*)

Rue Rembrant, on the first floor of a very pretty house near the parc Monceau. Here is a tableau lighted by the softer sun of the last days in September.

Time, 11 a. m.

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS, *President of the P. L. M. Railroad, is seated reading his mail. He is about fifty years old, but looks younger, thanks to the progress of modern chemistry.*

MADemoiselle NINA NINON, *a young vaudeville actress, looking very pretty in her laces, is glancing over his shoulder, as he reads.*

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. What kind of writing is this? A woman's?

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYER. It is. (*Keeps on reading.*)

MADemoiselle NINA NINON (*striking a dignified attitude suggesting jealousy*). And you have the nerve to read letters from women in my house! before me! Give me that letter!

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS (*calmly*). You want it very much?

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. Give me that letter!

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. I beg you to remember that I have never asked you to show me your correspondence.

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. It isn't the same thing—I do not receive letters from women—(*with authority*). Give me that letter! Quick!

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS (*giving her the letter*). Here it is. (*He looks at Mademoiselle Nina Ninon with an ironical smile as she reads the letter*).

MADemoiselle NINA NINON (*interrupting her reading by exclamations*). “My darling: (*Oh! scandalizing*) my darling—I have been thinking about you a great deal during the last few days, and I am very sorry that you should have to remain in Paris. (*You know—you can go away if you are bored—*) sh—should have to remain in Paris—We are having delightful weather here—(*where is that? Here. Oh, I see, Houlgate, Villa des Oeillets*)—and we never let a day pass without a ride or a picnic. In spite of all this I should be very sad away from you, if I did not have the children. (*The children, how absurd! It's from your wife.*) Louise has not been very well. I think she played too long on the sand beach. As for Maxime, he is very well. He fights with all the little boys

and usually comes out victorious, but you have no idea in what condition his clothes usually are! (*Nina Ninon reads on very seriously without interruption.*) Almost all our friends have gone away. Only the Boués are left and they are very kind to me. Fräulein is teaching me German. It fills up the time that is not taken up by the children. However, the days would not be so long if I heard from you oftener. I do not wish to complain, but I do worry when a week passes without a letter from you. Will you not try to steal away a few minutes from your work, and if you are not too tired, write to me, if only two words, telling me you are well and love me?

"I shall write every day as usual, regretting only that my letters are not more entertaining, but my life is so quiet here—I shall see you soon again, sweetheart. The little ones send their love and I the best tenderness of my heart.

"MARIE."

(*Mademoiselle Nina Ninon having finished her reading, remains a moment very thoughtful, the letter still in her hand.*)

MADemoisELLE NINA NINON. How old is your wife?

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. Thirty-one.

MADemoisELLE NINA NINON. How long have you been married?

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. Eight years.
(*Silence.*)

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. Is she pretty?
(*Monsieur Lambert considers a minute.*) If she is not pretty, why did you marry her? For her money? (*Silence.*) How mercenary men are!—And she loves you, too, poor woman. Her letter is awfully nice—(*Silence.*) Why do you deceive her?

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS (*smiling*). Look at yourself in the mirror.

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. No compliments, I beg of you—if I am a pretty blonde; if I have to sing idiotic things I needn't be silly. On the contrary, I think a great deal—and I observe—I see well—I do understand a great many things. I could write a novel about men.

(*Monsieur Lambert-Desnoyers smiles.*)

Why do you laugh? Certainly I could write a novel—and I *could* write it about men.

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. I didn't say you couldn't—what are you driving at?

MADemoiselle NINA NINON (*thinking*). What am I driving at?—Men are not very wonderful after all—your wife is twenty years younger than you. She positively adores you—she writes you lovely letters—you have two children and you leave them to have a good time in Paris (*excit-*

edly). You are perfectly disgusting, and if your wife were here I should tell her this. Do you hear? I should tell her: "Madame, your husband is disgusting."—There!

(Mademoiselle Nina Ninon, after this tirade, sits down and looks up at Monsieur Lambert-Desnoyers, with the air of an outraged moralist. Still calm he looks at her with a quizzical smile.)

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. Why don't you say something? You sit there like a log. You might at least be polite and answer me—

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. But, my dear, I really have nothing to answer. You are right.

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. Ah, you agree with me then?

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. I do agree with you fully. You have convinced me. I know now what there is left for me to do.

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. At last!

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. I shall take the first train for Houlgate and join my wife and children. It will be hard for me not to see you again, but——

MADemoiselle NINA NINON *(jumping up)*. What! Not see me again! Are you crazy?

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. Well! my dear—you are telling me that I am deceiving my

wife and leaving her to herself. I will go home and be what I am not, a faithful husband. That's very simple.

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. In other words, after deceiving your wife, you'll deceive me! You are a horrible man. Moreover, you have no right to leave me. It would be very cowardly. You know what I gave up for you! Now I do regret it more than I can say. (*Tears and hysterics—Monsieur Lambert-Desnoyers remains calm.*)

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. Listen, dear—I have no desire to leave you, as you say. I thought you were *sending* me away because your morals were shocked. Since you have changed your opinion——

MADemoiselle NINA NINON (*quickly*). I have not changed my opinion. I think that when a man has a wife and children he should be with them. That's all. As long as you are amusing yourself, you had better be doing it with me than some one else, *n'est-ce pas?* for your own good first—and for your wife's also. Heaven knows what kind of woman her husband might have found!

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. Assuredly, she would be grateful to you if she only knew.

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. Perhaps more than you think! I like the little woman who is studying German and looking after her children at

the seashore while her husband is having a good time in Paris with actresses, and I want you to be nice to her. (*Monsieur Lambert-Desnoyers raises his eyebrows.*) You needn't go back to Houlgate—but begin by answering the letter you received this morning (*with authority*) immediately.

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. You want me to write a letter?

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. I certainly do. Here is a pen, paper, ink, before you—begin. Do you hear?

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. Are you going to dictate the letter, also?

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. You're laughing? Well, that's precisely what I intend to do. You haven't heart enough to answer decently a letter from a woman like your wife, so I shall dictate it. Are you ready?

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. I am ready.

MADemoiselle NINA NINON (*dictating*). "My beloved little sweetheart?" (*Monsieur Lambert-Desnoyers does not write.*) Well, what are you waiting for?

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. I warn you that never in my life have I called my wife "My beloved little sweetheart."

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. So much the better—it will be a change—(*Monsieur Lambert-*

Desnoyers resigns himself and writes) : "I received your letter. It is a jewel. You do well to love the children. Women who have children are very fortunate."

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. Why in the the deuce do you want me to say such a thing to my wife?

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. Why? What I am dictating isn't foolish, is it? My dear, I have written many a letter in my life—to ambassadors—and even to a king once! Go on. (*Dictating*) "I am obliged to remain in Paris on very important business, but do not be jealous. I do not deceive you." (*To Monsieur Lambert-Desnoyers*) You understand it is better to say that, so she won't have any suspicion. (*Dictating*) "German is an extremely useful language. It is spoken in Baden-Baden and in Munich." (*To Monsieur Lambert-Desnoyers*) I have been in those places and it was a bore not to understand what people said. (*A thoughtful moment of silence.*) What could we tell her? Well, what you have already written is not bad. It will do very well. Now—end with a very affectionate farewell—Wait. What is the color of her hair?

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. Rather—brown.

MADemoiselle NINA NINON (*dictating*). "*A*

bientôt, my darling brunette—be good. Do not deceive me. I kiss you any way you choose.”

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. Oh—

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. Why do you say “Oh!” That is the way all love letters are finished. I can show you more than a hundred letters. Oh, the children, I was forgetting! Write—“Tell the children that I love them very much and that I have bought for them—(*she thinks*) two hundred francs’ worth of toys.” Now sign—the envelope—there—the address—that’s right. Well, what are you doing?

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS. Well, I am putting the letter in my pocket—I’ll mail it when I go out.

MADemoiselle NINA NINON. No—no.—No such thing! It would be like you to forget it—purposely or otherwise. (*She rings for the maid*) Here, Suzanne, mail this letter immediately!—How happy I am!—

MONSIEUR LAMBERT-DESNOYERS (*aside*). I would give a great deal to see my wife’s face when she reads that letter—Oh, well!

MADemoiselle NINA NINON (*tenderly*). Now, kiss your darling—I did well—didn’t I?
(*Interlude—kisses.*)

AN INTERNATIONAL FLIRTATION
(*Vierge Étrangère*)

*Miss Ethel Briggs, Villa Belle Rose, Saint Énogat,
To M. Robert d'Yriac,
Villa Chateaubriand, Dinard:*

YOU left me last night, my dear Robert, after our last waltz at the Casino with an impatient word and ugly look.

"What sort of woman are you?" you said, forgetting for once that I am not a woman, much less a woman belonging to you, but a young girl, free to do with her heart as she pleases. And after your truly shocking question you left me without waiting for an answer, looking at me, furthermore, angrily out of your beautiful black eyes—for you have beautiful eyes—I love men with black eyes and expressive eyebrows.

It annoyed me to have you leave me for the rest of the evening, although your place at my side was immediately taken by M. Derwent in the *flirting room*. You know him—the young Englishman who looks so well in a bathing costume. He is the owner of two large blue eyes—baby eyes—which make me want to laugh every time I look into them.

I never care to look at him except at bathing time. I was therefore soon bored and asked papa—who by the way was flirting with Mrs. Wilkinson—to take me home.

Once there I stayed a long time on the terrace looking out over the sea, which was then at high tide. My eyes were turned toward Dinard, and I could see by moonlight the pointed gables of your villa outlined against the sky. I thought you were there thinking of me, angry with me. It irritated me. It seemed to me unjust. This young Frenchman, I thought, although he may have beautiful black eyes and is witty, is nevertheless insufferable. Because it did not suit me this evening to go out on the Casino Terrace, to let him—how would you say it—caress my arms—he sulks, and insolently asks what sort of woman I am and leaves me. Have I been indiscreet with this young man? Am I different from other girls? Am I too forbidding for men to flirt with me?

I assure you, my dear Robert, I was humbly scrutinizing myself and trying to find out as minutely as possible and with much curiosity *what sort of a woman* I am.

I will tell you this morning the result of my meditation, so that we may be better friends when we meet this evening—to flirt again. For you may well imagine I do not wish to give up a splendid

flirt like you for a misunderstanding. Is it not nice of me to tell you all this? With you I am as amiable as a French girl would be.

You are angry with me, dear, because although I appear to be very much in love with you before other people I do not make use of the first opportunity we are alone to throw myself into your arms. I see quite well you hold against me these two things, and that is the reason you ask *what sort of woman* I may be. I will not let you caress my arms on the Casino Terrace. I have no right to think your eyes are beautiful, and since I do think so, I must let you caress my arms. Oh! how very French you are!

Listen to me and try to understand what I am going to endeavor to explain, having thought it out for myself, last night, while looking at the sea. I have no desire whatever, my dear Robert, to fall into the arms of any young man, not even yours. I am not interested in such things, at least in doing them, and when I amuse myself by speaking of them, it is always understood that I am not talking about myself. I speak of them as jokes as I would of any other pleasantries and never think of them afterwards. It irritates me and makes me angry to think that Frenchmen, who are such delightful flirts, always reduce flirting to caressing one's arms and doing other shocking things. Myself, my

arms, my whole body, are something reserved, willing to be present at a flirtation, but unwilling to be drawn into it. I permit you to kiss my lips because it is customary, but I do not like it, and you have noticed it. You are angry to hear me say this. Now, listen to something that will please your vanity: Last Monday when we went on an excursion to Mount Saint Michel I saw you from my room dressing for dinner, and I thought you had a really fine figure, at least it was as fine as M. Derwent's and I enjoyed looking at you, but I was looking at you as I would have inspected a fine piece of statuary or a picture. Had I looked at you with any other thought in my mind I would have been very much ashamed of myself.

I know very well what you will say: "Well, where will this lead us?" You have often said that. It is exactly what a Frenchman would say and it simply shows you know nothing about flirting. Real flirtation leads to *flirtation* and nothing more. If it led to anything else you know I would have long since forbidden it. You may think flirting is only a means for a young girl to hoodwink proprieties. Not at all. It is the means to amuse one's self without shocking Mrs. Grundy. This flirtation, begun at Dinard, will be followed by the winter flirtation on the Riviera and later on during the season in Paris and London, and so on until one of

us is tired of it. But neither in London, Paris nor the Riviera will I permit you to kiss my arms unless I should happen to marry you at any one of these places.

Now, we have come to the great question which must be in your mind, although you have never said anything about it. "Shall we ever marry?" To begin with, I'll tell you this first: The fact that I am richer than you is no obstacle. To have the husband I want I would willingly throw away all the money my father made in Chicago, reserving only enough to enable me to dress well. Marriage would allow you, would it not, all I——forbid you just now. Therefore, I shall have no desire to marry you as long as I dislike having you kiss my lips and caress my arms. However, as soon as I change my mind about these things, it will be absolutely necessary for me to marry you. You need not imagine that you must always mention the subject and be proposing every day. On the contrary, as I have told you before, it would be most annoying, and I would hate both you and the idea of marriage. Hence this is what I suggest after having carefully thought the matter over on my terrace.

You will, I know, be very reasonable and flirt nicely with me. You will never ask again to kiss my lips. Your foot will never again seek mine

underneath the table while sitting next to me at dinner. You will never sulk because I object to your caressing my arms on the Casino Terrace. As a reward I will be with you always. I'll appear to be very much in love with you before other people. I'll flirt with no one else, not even with M. Derwent—who looks so well in his bathing suit. At the same time I'll do my best to fall in love with you and become your wife—I had almost succeeded in persuading myself I wanted to marry you while looking at you at Mount Saint Michel, when my maid's coming in to do my hair interrupted my thoughts. Who knows? Next time I may succeed in falling in love with you, for there must be in this, as in all other sports,—practice.

Now, my dear Robert, regain your high spirits. Come and shake hands with me to-night at the Casino. There is no one I like quite as well as I do you. Do you not wish me to love you better than any one in the world? It depends upon you. Do through wisdom what the men of my own country do through laziness; that is to say, do not offer yourself so freely, but endeavor to increase my desire for you. Our marriage would be a lovely thing, my dear Robert! Think of it. It will help you to be patient, and believe me

Votre sincèrement,

ETHEL.

THE ADJUTANT (*L'Adjudant*)

Madame Vittoria Lanciani

To Monsieur Georges Brianchot:

THIS is the eleventh time you have written to me since I have been playing in your city. Your first letter said:

"This evening I shall be in the third row of the parquet on the right. I shall be recognizable by the uniform of an artillery adjutant. I will wear also a red rose in my buttonhole.

"One who adores you in silence."

Indeed I saw you. I cannot say I looked at you very carefully. 'Tis rather dangerous to let one's mind wander while on the stage, but I did notice an officer, quite young and good-looking, wearing a beautiful red rose, seated where you indicated.

The next day as I came to the theatre for a rehearsal another letter signed by you was handed me, containing four closely written pages, in the most beautiful handwriting I ever saw. You were suffering cruelly, you said, loving me from afar. You must see me, speak to me, spend a few minutes now and then with me—nothing more. Oh! you

swore upon your honor as a soldier that was all which was needed to make you the happiest adjutant in the whole army!

I am sure you must have thought me very unkind or else lacking in good breeding because I did not answer your four pages. What could you expect? I have received so many, many passionate notes of this kind, conveying usually this thought of the writer: They say this actress is capable of doing something rash—I am young and have no money. What risks do I run? Let's try.

I did not answer you—you wrote every day. There must have been some true feeling in those daily letters, for I read them through instead of using them to test my curling iron. Gradually they became less respectful and more passionate—you were beginning to let me see you knew why you were not received. "An artillery adjutant is not very much surely—especially when not very rich." Then you would add you were worthy of being better treated, you belonged to a very good family—rather wealthy—that some day you would have a very important position in the town, unless I should prefer your remaining in the army. What was I to answer to that? Tell me! Only one answer was possible containing but five words: "I expect you this evening." As I did not wish to see you, I could not give you such an answer.

I will tell you why directly. From that time your opinion of me was formed and you discovered it was simply too naïve to show too much sincere passion to a woman like me. In an envelope you enclosed five bank notes of a thousand francs each. —(Oh, those five notes! Cold perspiration stood on my face when I found out that they came from you). With the five thousand francs were the following words:

“Adjutant Brianchot desires to spend to-morrow night with Madame Lanciani. R. S. V. P.”

For an answer the five bank notes were returned to you immediately. As you are a gentleman you realized at once you had done something nasty and insulting. I am not a good woman, maybe, but I am a woman upon whom *you* had no claim. To this episode I owe your most touching letter, the last one, in which you beg forgiveness. Why did you end it with a threat? “’Tis well,” you say, “I know now that you will never love me. You will even hate me after this. I know what is left for me to do. I will wait until to-morrow night. If by to-morrow night I have no letter saying you will be mine, Tuesday I shall have done away with myself. *Adieu, madame*, forget and be happy.”

Mon Dieu! I know such threats are often made without any intention of carrying them out. How-

ever, sometimes—Ah, what a horrible thought!—You are impulsive. I have read your letters. I have seen you so many evenings sitting pale and dejected in your seat.—Then, the five thousand francs, enormous sum for a soldier. God knows how you got them.—Everything put together frightened me. To your threat you owe this answer.

You ask me to be yours. You do not want to live unless I consent. Truly, child, I cannot be angry with you because you find me to your liking. On the contrary, I am flattered. Do not think that I do not like you. I really do. You look so well that I am certain you are very popular. This will calm your ruffled vanity, I hope, will it not? Now, this desire you feel for me—do you not think during the twenty-five years of stage life many men, young and old, handsome and homely, rich and poor, have told me a similar story—almost every evening? not counting afternoons and nights—and do not hold it against me if I have come to look upon it—this masculine desire—as a common, every-day offering, almost without value, merely as the natural result of my personality and reputation.

I well know that any other actress in my place would have called forth the same desire in men.—Ah, I assure you it is not very tempting, nor

very decent, after a while, especially when one is getting old—which is my case. (I have a son nineteen years old.) I see no homage in it—rather the opposite.

You reply: "I love you with my whole soul. I am suffering intensely. I would rather die——"

Nevertheless, if I had spent a night with you for five thousand francs, you would have been satisfied and you would no longer have thought of killing yourself. And if I became yours this evening, you would be perfectly willing to allow me to go to-morrow on my tour in Belgium. I know only too well the violent desire for possession men feel for an actress.—They must have her at once. After that they are satisfied. What matters it to them who will take her afterwards or what she may become?—No? This is not your case? One moment of pleasure will not satisfy you? Then, child, I must not even grant you that moment. I may really tell you the truth. It is only the fear of being loved truly and sincerely by you, which causes my refusal to see you.

I am not a prude, believe me,—all the follies of reckless youth, all the sad necessities of my profession have thrown me into so many lovers' arms, that I could be yours without feeling afterwards any less respect for myself than I did before.

What I am saying hurts you? So much the better. The pain will cure you. I will not have you love me! At your age you must only love a very young woman who will be wholly yours, or the woman you will marry. If you should care for me, what do you suppose your future would be? I could not spend my life in your barracks.—You would follow me—leave the army—turn actor—or worse, an actress' lover, accompanying her wherever she goes. You rebel—That is what awaits you, my dear, and you cannot deny it.

And pray, what of me, if you become thus part of my luggage, as I have seen done by some unfortunate artists of my age, with young men not as good as you?

No, I have no illusions. After a few days of folly you would realize all that you had sacrificed for an old woman—Yes, old—*old, old*, do you hear? I have been beautiful, but am so no longer. Keep in your heart, child, the picture you have of Mireille and of Marguerite as she appeared to you under the rouge, the costumes, the glamour of music and footlights. I should weep to see the painful disillusion in your face were you to see me as I really am, such as fifty years have made me—Now, supposing disillusion only came to you after I had been yours? What if I began to love you at the time you wanted to leave me and forget!

No, truly, I must not at my age risk such an adventure.

I have no desire to gain the sincere love of a young man having nothing to give in return. I could not hold it.

Do you realize, at last, that all this is for your own good and that, after all, I might well afford to spend a night with a handsome adjutant? I did consider it an instant. It would have been less trouble than to write this long letter. On second thought, I saw that instead of the feverish hours you dreamed of spending at my side I could give you something better than an old woman's caresses.

Enclosed in this envelope you will find a portrait of myself taken about fifteen years ago, when I still was, even to my lover, the handsome woman I appear to you on the stage! Keep it as a proof that I did not disdain the love of a young officer with a red rose. Something written on the back of it will say as much.

Come, child, be brave. You see I had to have courage to write to you as I did about myself. If you want to know whence it came, I will tell you. When I received the letter in which you spoke of killing yourself I thought of my own dear boy who will soon be out of college. He, too, will have to enter the army. I pictured him, like you, a soldier in a small town, falling in love with a passing act-

ress. To kill one's self for so little!—spoil one's life! May God save him from such a fate as a reward for having saved you to-day!

Foolish boy! let me kiss you as your mother would!

EXPERIENCE (*Expérience*)

Madame Ambrus

To Her Son, Monsieur Jean Ambrus:

THIS trouble has crushed you, my poor, dear child; your strength is gone, and as you did when a little boy and were hurt, you seek the shelter of your mother's arms. Dearest, my arms are opened to you and my humble roof is yours whenever you wish to come and live beneath it. No need of your asking leave to do so. Everything I possess is yours.

However, before burning your bridges behind you, I pray you will think seriously and also allow me to advise you. I am not saying that the thing you want to do so impulsively is not the best thing after all. The matter is so very serious, once your decision is made, it will be irrevocable. You will not be angry with your old mother because she tells you not to be too rash. You know she loves you and only wishes what is best for you—do you not?

I am not taking Léonie's part. What she did was very ugly—and was done without the excuse a neglecting and wild husband would have given

her. You are uprightness itself, and a woman ought to be satisfied with the depth of your character. Léonie seemed sweet and affectionate and you gave the impression of being happy in your home—and suddenly you learn of her meetings with Letexier.

Here, let me tell you that you were wrong to allow this young man to come so often to your house. I was shocked to see during my last visit to you that Letexier went with you to the theatre, to the country, to dine at the restaurants; in fact, whatever you planned included him. The habits of a bachelor forty years old are never good, believe me. He is apt to be blasé and heartless, and in an intimacy like yours his eyes would turn oftener in the direction of your wife than in yours. However, as I saw nothing improper, I said nothing. Why should I alarm you? To-day I regret having kept silent.

The thought that Léonie—and that man. Ah! my poor dear! How dreadfully it has upset me. I am sure that in your grief you called for your mother, too far, alas! to comfort you; and at once, impulsively, not wishing to see your unhappy wife, not wishing to be in the same house with her, you went to the hotel, leaving only a note, saying: "I know. Good-by. You will never see me again." As I told you before, I am not saying this was

wrong—you obeyed the first call of honor—but acknowledge that it was rather imprudent. Your young wife left alone without explanation. Do you know that others might have done the very thing you wanted to avoid? What would then have become of your little girl? Thank God! Léonie acted sensibly, wrote to you, asking to see you, begging for forgiveness.

I know you are stubborn; you do not change your mind easily. You refused to see her; now when she writes to you, you do not even open her letters. You want to leave Paris, forget you have a wife and a child and come and live with your old mother. You finish your letter by saying: "You cannot blame me for acting as I do, for you have always been a good woman and a saint."

"A saint," dear, that is too strong. I truly have tried to set you a good example so that your mother might be for you a woman such as you would wish your wife to be. It is a good thing to have a boy think his mother is perfection itself. However, while living as good a life as she can a woman learns to know life's difficulties; she sees much misery around her, even in the homes which seem most happy; some one is sure to confide in her, and, having a heart—even though it is only the temptations and faults of others she witnesses, should she herself be fortunate enough not to meet

with the same fate—she learns to be indulgent and charitable.

That a woman should love some one else after marriage is certainly indiscreet. You would be wrong, however, to think—as most men do—that because of that love she is necessarily worthless.

Often, believe me, she loves her husband and her child and would gladly sacrifice everything to them. A lover is the result of an awful accident in her life, although she may see him again and again, like one possessed of a chronic disease, in spite of her remorse and ever-renewed, and never-kept good resolutions. Here let me tell you, I once had a friend—I'll tell you about her when I see you. Let us come back to Léonie.

Come, Jean. Although rightfully indignant at her, you confess to me that the letters that moved you most—the first ones—were those where “remorse and sincerity rung truest.”

Dear boy, she was not acting, as you seem to think. Be sure that she now hates the other man and herself as much as you do. Society women may look upon adventures lightly and be amused by them, but we women wisely brought up to dislike *vilaines femmes*, it is a terrible thing for us to have forfeited in our own eyes the right to call ourselves good. The friend of whom I was speaking to you a little while ago (you did not know her,

or at least, you cannot remember her, for you were too small then), when she suddenly realized that she could no longer call herself a "good woman" nearly went mad. She wanted to break away from her home; kill herself. She had a child. Well, she finally made up her mind to go back and take up the burden of her daily life as though nothing had happened. She was a good woman, I assure you. Do not be irritated because I say she was good. She certainly was, for she suffered cruelly of a fault that no one knew of but herself; suspected by no one, losing none of the love her husband and child bestowed upon her.

How such a thing happens in our peaceful existence, my dear, is incomprehensible.

It happens, I believe, that our modest and simple life, seemingly so full, so attractive, so amusing during the first few years of married life, gradually becomes insufficient to occupy all of one's time and thought; the household is running smoothly, the child has grown up and no longer requires ceaseless attention; one's husband is still in love with one, assuredly, but is no longer—as at first—forever thinking of one. Well! something is lacking—the days drag on drearily. One does take one's self to task, remonstrate with and demonstrate to one's self that one has everything wished for, that one

is happy. Reason, however, does not always hold against sentiment. There comes a day when one begins to pity one's self. What? At twenty-eight life has nothing more to offer one? The sweetness of it all gone forever? Love, everything, gone never to return? And yet one would enjoy and appreciate it all now so much more than when one was younger. Then one tries to bring back those wonderful years—to charm one's husband again, to love him more. He, poor man, his mind on something else, contented with his peaceful home, does not understand; and to one's amazement one finds after a while how irresponsible one's husband is and, very much annoyed, one becomes resentful.

Now, as all men try to win young women in whose society they are thrown, it is a rare thing that a woman—who feels as I just pictured you—does not find a man at hand to help her to her downfall.

Yes, thus it is, as I have observed, that such a thing happens—just because the woman wanted to bring back the past years of love and happiness.

Women are honest in their frailty, and it seems to me they should not be condemned too severely, for they are most unhappy in their misery. If you could have seen my poor friend I was telling you of, if you could have seen how she suffered! How many times she wished that what happened

to Léonie would happen to her—in order to be done with lies and deception.

You see, Jean, I am sure your wife's heart is all right. Mothers, you know, cannot be deceived on that score, when their son's happiness is at stake. I have watched her. She loves you. I may tell you now that Léonie wrote to me since this misfortune befell her; she told me everything without trying to excuse herself. She begged me to intercede for her. You must not think she loves Letexier. Indeed no! There came a day in the spring when the sun shone too bright; when life went coursing through her veins, when she desired to be loved and petted by you, my son; yes, by you—there came a day when her peaceful existence no longer satisfied her. Then the man who had been watching her stole a desire, an emotion that was intended for you.

The best way to avenge yourself is to win back your wife. The wrecking of your life, your wife's, and your child's would be too great a price to pay for this mistake. Do you believe me? Will you love me less because I say to you: "Léonie has made a mistake, but I assure you she is a good woman?"

Surely nothing gives me more pleasure than to hear you say, "Mother, you are a saint." The friend whose suffering I spoke of did not unde-

ceive her husband and child, and her remorse was the greater because of that.

However, if I thought that it would influence you, I would say to you, I, your mother, do not know whether or not I have the right to condemn Léonie, for in her place I do not know whether I should have had the strength to resist the temptation that came to her; and had I done so, it seems to me that I would not have suddenly become unworthy of your pity, your affection and your respect.

Now, child, be generous, forgive your wife and take her back. She will never play with fire again. It will never happen again, I give you my word. Léonie will be to you—if you consent to forget—a wife worthy of your love and respect. Yes, respect; the very same respect you have for your mother. Do you believe me?

Come! Léonie and your daughter are here at my house. The child calls for you and weeps because you do not come. We told her you would be here to-morrow. Will you have us tell the child an untruth?

RECONCILIATION (*Conciliation*)

Madame Ardeville

To Madame Dumoustier:

AH, MY dear, many things have happened to me; many trials and tribulations have befallen me in the last short month. I am all upset, and I do not know whether I am dreaming or awake. This morning, opening my eyes, my brain still half asleep, I thought: "Well, I am no longer married. I am alone—all alone," and languidly stretching myself, I came in contact with some part of my husband's anatomy. *My husband's*, do you hear?

Have we made up? Yes, and I was far from expecting we should. I enjoyed six weeks of freedom, and now I am in bondage again—a married woman once more.

After all, I am not a bit sorry, for I love Paul, but it was fine to have no more cares, no more duties, and I really was beginning to enjoy the situation. I am a very proper married woman, and I would not let any one so much as kiss my cheek. If one is divorced or a widow, why that is a different thing, for one is free. My freedom has

been short, but I enjoyed it immensely. I was acquiring valuable knowledge from the bar, the judges and others. Suddenly all means of enlightenment was taken from me. Just imagine a blind man made to see and suddenly losing his sight again. Well this is my case. I am now blind. Let me at least enjoy myself by telling you what I saw when I was not blind.

Darling Alice, you know I am an honest woman; rather thoughtless at times, but thoroughly honest and careful of my husband's honor. Anyway, I loved Paul and he loved me. He showed his love in a thousand ways. We were very happy, were we not?

Trouble came through my sister—a sister fifteen years older than one, and living with one and one's husband is equal to two mothers-in-law. Poor Annette is not really wicked. But to see us forever kissing each other when all she had to kiss were pictures of the Madonna, or on cold winter nights to have to take to bed an irresponsive hot-water bottle while her younger sister has a live one with lovely mustaches. Poor Annette! Do you blame her for being cross? She actually aged five years during our first year of married life. The second year Paul said to me: "Your sister is getting unbearable; we must find her a husband."

The idea seemed most amusing and incredible,

but on second thought I became convinced that this was the only thing to do.

"I know some one," said Paul resolutely. "You wait. Annette is not handsome, but she has a pretty attractive dowry. Leave it to me."

He announced his intentions to my sister. At first she took it for a joke, but when she realized he was in earnest she showed such sincere joy that Paul was actually touched.

The next day at lunch he brought in the suitor. I expected to see some ridiculously bearded man. Not at all! He was a man about thirty, alert, fairly well groomed, and one of the clerks in the bank of which Paul is president.

"He is ambitious, intelligent, and frets at being poor; he'll take her," said Paul to me.

For one week, two weeks, he paid his daily visit to Annette. Annette was just flourishing. The engagement was about to be announced, when one fine morning a letter came for my husband. The suitor would take no longer; everything was up; disproportion of fortune—difference in age, which might lead to suppose that—would always remember how kind, etc. The game was up; the man was beating a retreat.

"He is an idiot," said Paul. "I'm going to dismiss him."

Dismiss him he did. But would you believe it,

my sister held Paul responsible for her disappointment. She accused him of having made her a subject of ridicule and began to hate him in earnest. She had often tried to throw suspicion on his fidelity to me. Do you know what she did? She employed the help of an agency. It was discovered that Paul spent an hour daily on a certain ground floor of the *Rue Bassano*. Annette worked on me so that I consented to lay a trap for my husband. He was caught. I became the possessor of two compromising letters. Left to myself I would have forgiven him. My sister would not allow it. She brought about a rupture between us, and I brought suit for a divorce.

To ask for a divorce did not seem any harder to me than to ask for a box at the Opera. Ah! dear one, never divorce. You can't imagine all that has been invented to disgust the parties. You must have an attorney, then a lawyer, then judges, a president; a lot of things which demand many visits and extensive correspondence. Things were made harder for me because my husband filed a suit against me. Annette, fearing we might make up, had made me leave home.

We had taken refuge in a Retreat House, for ladies only, and kept by Sisters. It was not very cheerful; the very walls emitted boredom, evil-mindedness, pose; but it was, to all appearances,

perfectly proper. They made a specialty of divorce among society people. At the time I stayed there we were six in number—four young women and two old ones. You should have heard us talking about men. And Annette! Should a young girl happen to spend a few days in the place she would vow herself to spinsterhood forever and ever. By the by, the two old women had their second husbands in view.

The Superior gave us the names of the attorney and lawyer; both seemed attached to the house like secular preachers. They were the best that could be had. The attorney was M. Cartelier, a blond giant, with long drooping mustaches; you know the type of man I go wild over. The lawyer—guess—Darthenay, my Darthenay—our Darthenay, if you prefer, for he made love to you as well as to me at Étretat. Picture his astonishment. “You, Blanche!” (He had fallen into the bad habit of calling me Blanche after you went away. He took my hands, kissed them. I was rather moved myself, but managed to be cold and dignified. “Sir, I did not come here to flirt—I came to talk business with you. Mother Eucharis sent me.”

Darthenay jumped.

“Mother Eucharis! Then you are suing for a divorce?”

"Yes."

Never before did so small a word upset any one so completely, I am sure. Before I had time to move, my Darthenay (our Darthenay, for I will not be selfish) had seized my hands and was drawing me to him.

"Divorcing! Oh, Blanche, dear, how lovely! You know I love you!" He tried to convince me; I told him I was still married. He was so gently sympathetic, so tender, that I made up my mind on the spot that he must be my husband, so I said to him:

"Henri, you must marry me!"

He did not seem surprised.

"Certainly," he replied. "You are the ideal woman for a man tender and intelligent. (What do you think of his conceit?) Pretty, elegant, witty, somewhat in love."

I dropped my eyes.

"Then, as soon as I have my divorce?" I said.

"Surely! Only——"

"Oh! there is an only!"

"I am married."

This was a blow I was far from expecting. I should have thought of anything but that!

"Sir, you have behaved shamefully. You should not toy with a woman's honor. And you told me you adored me at Étretat, and no sooner am I out

of sight than you get married. You did not love me."

I felt very sorry. Darthenay gave me a graphic picture of his despair at my refusal. "I knew you were honesty itself—I had no chance—I tried to forget."

"Well," I said to him, "get a divorce and we will marry."

"That is a good idea," he replied. "I'll think about it. But first, let's talk about yours. A month will be all that is necessary. Meanwhile, when shall I see you again?"

I made out I did not understand him.

"You may talk to my attorney."

"What do I care for your attorney. It's you I want to see. Say when."

I finally promised to see him again.

"By the way, who is your attorney?"

"M.—wait a minute. Mother Eucharis gave me a slip of paper. M. Cartelier."

He did not seem a bit pleased.

"Cartelier! Let me advise you. Do not go to see Cartelier."

"Why not?"

"It is not proper for a pretty woman like you to go to a lawyer who has such a reputation."

"What kind is it?"

"He is said to compromise his clients."

"Well! What about you?"

"I am not in the habit of doing so. I am too tender, while he—he is a brute!"

He took me in his arms to prove to me how tender he was, and as I was going down the steps he called after me:

"Don't go. He is a brute."

Alice, what would you have done in like circumstances? You would have gone straight to the attorney to prove to yourself that you were not afraid of brutes. Well, I went back to the convent, postponing the decision until to-morrow, and to have another talk with Mother Eucharis. Upon the repeated assertion of the latter that he was the smartest attorney in town, I made up my mind to ignore the advice of Darthenay.

In the presence of the man I understood his reputation of being a "ladies' man." A beautiful Celtic type, eyes like two blue gems, impossible to fathom. Really, it is too bad such a man should be an attorney—he ought to be an artist or an actor. I told him so, but not at my first call—later. Let me tell you about that.

Nothing that I feared happened during my visit. He was perfectly proper—even indifferent. He a brute? No, indeed! He was not even amiable, but very smart. In less than fifteen minutes he had the whole case and was summing it up in tele-

graphic style: Husband fond of women—nice in his home—embittered sister; she caused the trouble; you were not very anxious at first; now your mind is made up to go to the end. Is it not so?

That was all, and it was time to go.

Why should I not tell you? I was disappointed. It is not very pleasant to have made an extra provision of courage and then to find it had not been at all necessary. Had Darthenay lied to me? I wanted to make an impression upon my attorney. I had failed. Too bad to like people who care nothing for you. This thought took away all the pleasure I might have felt on meeting Darthenay. I certainly behaved abominably and treated the poor man most unkindly.

Back to the convent I discreetly brought the conversation of my co-sufferers to the subject of Cartelier. Every one praised his ability as a professional man—"smart, very smart." When I tried to make them talk about the man himself, I noticed blushes, reticences. Ah! I thought, has the man been rude to everybody but me? I took aside a little brunette who was divorcing on ridiculous grounds. I complained of Cartelier's manner toward me. The little simpleton blushing told me he had been exceedingly brutal with her.

Really I must find out for myself. With some excuse or other, I went to see the attorney again.

I must find out, solve the riddle. You can imagine how controlled I was to be even gracious to the blond giant, whom I was beginning to dislike cordially. I was gracious, even more than gracious. Looking over his shoulder to examine one of the documents I brushed his moustache ever so slightly. It was hardly noticeable, but it sufficed to galvanize him into action. Oh, my dear! the terrible adventure!

It is useless to tell you that I never went back, except when absolutely necessary, and that I was very angry at myself.

I had one more visit to make to see the President, who was to try to reconcile us. Made wiser by my first two experiences, I sent for the little brunette, whose case was about a week ahead of mine.

"Oh!" she said, "that one is perfectly harmless. No longer young, lavish in his compliments, very gallant after the manner of old gentlemen. Do not be afraid and be kind to him, for he might keep you from getting your divorce."

Keep me from getting my divorce! Two weeks before I would not have cared, except for Annette's sake, but now that I had tasted freedom I could not bear to be disappointed.

I was therefore amiable to the President, M. de la Coudraie. He was a small man, well fed, not too

fat—a florid face framed by brown side whiskers. The one occupation of this man during our talk was to indulge in more or less *risqué* jokes, which were not a bit witty, upon the relations between man and wife. Every now and then to bring him back to the point I would say:

“Every evening, sir, my husband would go and spend an hour with Henriette de Conti.”

He would interrupt:

“Every evening? What a wonderful man this Paul must be! And he was nice to you?—affectionate? Wonderful! wonderful!”

He would walk about, spin on his heels, kiss my hand, take me by the chin, smile into my eyes with a look at once bold and paternal. I was exceedingly bored, but remembering the threat of the little brunette, I did not dare send him about his business. Finally, after an hour of rambling talk, he said to me:

“Come here, child.”

“I went. He took my hands and began a very nice little sermon:

“My dear child, to divorce is a very serious thing. A pretty woman like you alone in the world, without any protector. (His fingers were around my wrists). For such a little thing. You cannot make me believe that you no longer love your husband—because (his lips were on my wrists) he

spent a few hours in the *Rue Bassano*? Think of how many days of happiness he gave you. Remember (his left arm stole around my waist) how happy you were on your wedding trip."

Was it not stupid? I was very much moved by what the President was recalling to my mind. I was thinking of Paul, poor Paul!—he certainly was gay, amusing, generous and much in love. I had missed him so much during the past six weeks. The thought of coming back to him was shaping itself slowly in my mind, and through the caressing voice of the President I was already picturing a new honeymoon, when——

"Sir!"

I was on my feet in a minute, like one suddenly awakened, and perfectly furious. M. de la Cou-draie caught on the fly the hand that would have struck him in the face and kissed it.

"Fortunately for you, my beauty," he said with a smile, "I have not my judicial gown on, otherwise this would have cost you five years of prison."

Thereupon we parted, not too angry with each other.

This good man had spoken to me of Paul; had said what I was dying to acknowledge to myself every day and did not dare to.

Annette was watching for my return. She was perfectly delighted with her new life, perfectly de-

lighted to live among women who by profession always have something evil to say about men.

"Well," she asked, "are things going on well?"

I sent her forcibly about her business.

"Let me alone; you are always trying to excite me against Paul. You alone are the cause of all this trouble. I beg you will never again speak to me about my husband in your evil way."

"Well," she replied, with that cutting voice I envy her and which alone belongs to soured old maids, "very well, go to him. You will find him in the *Rue Bassano*. You three can have a cup of tea together."

Yes, Paul might be with that woman. She is pretty, too—I saw her portrait—and now that Paul is free he probably does not leave her.

"You are right," I said to Annette. "I will have my divorce." And I went to my room to weep.

Three days later I was called to meet my husband and see if we could not be reconciled. I went with Annette. Would you believe it, Alice, dear, my heart was beating hard; not because I feared the divorce would not be granted me, but at the thought of seeing my husband again, of being face to face with him once more. We were ushered into a room full of people seated in corners, looking sad and bored. I searched for Paul. He was not there. Suddenly my sister's elbow dug into me.

"There he is, the wretch. Do look dignified."

I was dignified and looked at the "wretch." He was thinner, still elegant, fascinating, alert, violets in his buttonhole, his hat well brushed, his necktie of the latest pattern. I compared him to Darthenay, to the blond giant, and decided in his favor.

Meanwhile Annette was lecturing me:

"Try to be firm; don't be a weakling! Remember Henriette de Conti! Well, what are you looking at?"

I was looking at Paul. He was actually winking at me. His pantomime was more that of a lover than that of a husband. He still loved me—so his eyes were saying, and I telegraphed back:

"Husband mine, I should like to give you a kiss, but Annette won't let me." At that moment Annette grabbed me by the arm and forced me to turn my back upon Paul. Just then an usher called out:

"Ardeville against Ardeville!"

"Courage!" called my sister, "and remember Henriette de Conti."

I heard her repeat that name until the door shut behind us.

"Sit down," said the usher, "the President and his clerk will be here in a few minutes."

We were left alone. Paul sat down and I went to the window. I was trying hard to be angry with him. I wanted to knock down the well-

dressed, handsome man a few steps back of me. Suddenly I heard him get up. His boots creaked upon the floor; the odor of violets came near. How very foolish of me. I did not dare to turn round; I did not dare move. I felt as though I should faint, as though I should fall—and effectively I did fall—into Paul's arms. Ah! I could not help it! Say what you will, you would have done the same thing had you been in my place.

"Well, everything is all right," said a voice I recognized as belonging to President de la Cou-draie, as he found us seated on the sofa, one of my hands in that of Paul's.

Bless his kind soul! He sent us home by another way—and so we escaped Annette.

CONFESSION OF FAITH (*Les Pratiques*)

Madame de Raimbourg
To Madame Lespanié:

MY DEAR JULIE:

Two words only—but very important ones.

First. Where can I find the little cakes, shaped like tiles, which we ate at your house Wednesday last? Both my husband and G—— are asking for them.

Second. Lent is coming—a time for grand washing of consciences. I do not know to whom I shall go for confession. My old confessor—Abbé Lapioche—who was so kind, so deaf, died last January.

You—who are a clever and well-informed woman—must know the best man to take his place. He must be an intelligent priest, up-to-date—an *homme du monde*—who will not ask absurd questions. In a word, a man who is accustomed to hear confessions of such women as we are. Do not send me a dozen names, for I should not know how to select one. Just tell me to whom you go. I'll go to your confessor. We must

be two of a kind, or at least have one common sin.

Good-by, dear. I thank you beforehand.

ROBERTE.

P. S.—Tell me the exact name of the cakes.

Madame Lespanie:

Here is, my dear Roberte, the address you requested of me: *Riboullet 340 Faubourg Saint Honoré* (this is where you can find the cakes). They are called “artichoke leaves.” Keep it a secret. It is so hard to have something new for guests. My “artichoke leaves” have had much success. Would you believe that H—— found them out? He is a wonder.

However, H—— cannot help me to find a confessor as easily as he helped me find the cakes. When Abbé Leplâtre was suddenly transferred to Langres, I found myself in the same trouble you are in just now. He would have suited you to perfection—a perfect saint—very strict with himself, and very indulgent to his worldly parishioners.

Quite a number of us “mondaines” were in the habit of going to him. He was the confessor of Madame de Formeuil, my dear, and of her sister-in-law, Laura. You may know he was well seasoned!—nothing astonished him! Now, he might have been too holy to see anything wrong in us. I

was inclined to think so when he would reply to my most perilous confidences, "Very well, dear child," in a most fatherly way. Well, it is not within our province to give a confessor a course of lectures. My conscience and I were at peace!

After hearing of the good Abbé's transfer to Langres, I called to congratulate him and at the same time asked him who would succeed him, who would henceforth undertake the cleansing of the naughty consciences of Madame Formeuil, Laura, and myself.

"I recommend all these ladies to the Abbé Prudhon, who is to take my place at Saint Sulpice," he said.

"Is he like you?" I asked.

"*Mon Dieu!* I do not know what I am like," replied the good Abbé, smiling, "but Abbé Prudhon is very venerable and learned. Moreover, he belongs to an excellent family. He lived in the world for a long time before he was touched by grace. He will be perfectly at home amongst you."

On the strength of this we all brought our sins, great and small, to Abbé Prudhon. He understood everything! To be sure it was very noticeable to us that he had been *touched by grace*, as Abbé Leplâtre said, after fifteen years of fast living. I think *grace* must have come to the Abbé in the shape of a woman's deception and he is holding

the sex responsible for it! Ah, my dear Roberte, one came out of his confessional pretty well broken up in body and soul!

The beloved *lamb*s of Abbé Leplâtre could not endure such treatment more than once. They took to their heels, and are still running. I, for my part, respected him and would have returned to him if H—— had not vetoed my going. Abbé Prudhon had made me promise to have nothing more to do with H——, I think G—— would not tolerate your going to Abbé Prudhon any more than H—— did my going. Since then I have lived without going to church—till Easter.

At Easter my conscience awakened. I would not let this great day pass without being absolved. The difficulty, however, was in finding a confessor. I thought the best thing to do would be to go to a quarter of Paris unknown to me, step into the first church I came across, make my confession without knowing the priest, and without his knowing me.

The following Saturday I dressed plainly, took a cab, and, at my request, the driver took me to the *Esplanade des Invalides*. I left it to Providence to guide my steps.

A half hour's walk through most interesting streets brought me to a plain white church without a steeple. I entered, hoping the good Lord was with me.

Confession was going on as I had foreseen. Three or four old women in black, two young girls and a little boy were kneeling, waiting before *the one* confessional. I lingered till my turn came. It was long in coming and I had plenty of time to examine my conscience. Were the novelty and simplicity of the place influencing me?—I found myself exceedingly penitent!

There were so many poor people coming and going. Their many attendant odors, mixed with the stale smell of incense in the chapel, made my wealth, comfort and security seem almost my greatest sin. The one thing I had to confess appeared so much worse here in this little church than if I had been poor and one of the people, such as my kneeling neighbors.

Under these impressions I began my confession.

Ah, my dear! Take my advice. If you value your peace of mind, never go to a priest in a poor church. I should suppose the poor do not love each other in the same way we worldly folks do—or perhaps those whose moral code is such as ours do not go to confession. Really the poor priest did not understand me at all. I must explain to him—give details—tell how many times. It was most uncomfortable I assure you. What a scolding I received! An awful sermon! He compared me successively to all the ill-famed women

of the Old and New Testament: Raab, Bathsheba, the Samaritan woman, etc. The worst of it all was that in my own mind I agreed with him, and I said to myself: "Evidently this priest is right—I am beyond redemption—an abominable sinner."

He ended his sermon by requesting a solemn promise not to see H—— any more. Nothing short of that. And he asked it as he might have asked me to recite the Lord's Prayer or give a small sum to the church. I protested I could not make such a promise. I told him things were not done in that way in society. He replied in good faith: "Our Lord does not go into society. If you really care to find Him, you must give up what you call society."

He would not give in to my way of thinking, and being too loyal to make a promise I never could keep, I went home *sorry*, but *unabsolved*.

This adventure, however, had filled me with humility.

Once again in my own neighborhood, among my bibelots, in my own house, my servants around me, the contrition I had felt in the poor little church diminished. However, it did not disappear altogether. I felt like an awful sinner, and thought over the matter of my *conversion* as the Abbé had crudely put it during the following evening and night. Next morning I was almost convinced,

when, unfortunately, I received while still in bed a lovely note from H—— asking a rendezvous for the afternoon. My good resolutions took flight—forever.

What did I do next?

Well! I gave up trying to adorn sin with a semblance of religion. I no longer go to confession—but do not tell this to Laura or her sister-in-law—for it would do me harm. I go to church occasionally—to church bearing the names of saints whose lives were not perfection—like Saint Augustin or Saint Magdala. I go there to pray for my *conversion* with alas! a secret desire that my prayer will not be answered very soon, for youth fades quickly, and I passionately love my sin. When Lent comes I no longer go to confession, seeking absolution in far-away churches, but I have a private talk with my own God, telling Him why I refrain.

My prayer to Him runs somewhat like this:

“Oh! Lord, before Thee stands a miserable Parisian woman, belonging to the world—*ou l'on s’amuse*—that is to say, an unimportant soul enclosed in a body Thou hast deigned to fashion most attractively. Allow me to remind Thee that my parents, my husband, and all those who have had charge of me have taken no care of my soul. They did everything for its perishable envelope; they

cared for it; adorned it; and paid it all sorts of homage. Alas! Lord, why didst Thou bring me up so badly? Why didst Thou throw me into such a sad world? Why was I not born of parents of kind and honest disposition, but bourgeois of Langres for instance? My only ideal would then be to embroider slippers for Abbé Leplâtre.

"Wherever I look, I see nothing but bad examples. All that Thou forbiddest is joyfully done by all the people in our set, and even by members of my own family. How canst Thou expect poor weak me to be a saint? To make matters worse, Thou hast put H—— in my path—a man no woman has been able to resist and who loves me—at least he tells me he does. How could poor weak me resist him? Have pity on me—do not condemn me. In a little while I shall be no longer young, no longer beautiful. H—— will cease to love me, and I promise Thee I will then come back to Thee. I will be Thine only, and will not neglect to go to confession.

"Until then I must be satisfied to practise the virtues that are not too hard for me, such as being charitable to the poor—loving my neighbor, and forgiving them.

"I think a good father would understand me—and Thou art a good father."

This is, my dear Roberte, my confession of faith for the present. It must do, and I am telling you about it as freely and as generously as I am giving you the address where the cakes are to be bought.

Please do not tell our delightfully naughty friends. They would laugh at me and go around telling everybody I have no religion.

My love to you, your husband and G——.

JULIE.

HER FAVORITE AUTHOR
(*Mon Romancier*)

Madame Hautmont

To Monsieur Pierre Delestang, homme de lettres:

ARE you satisfied, my dear Pierre, with the contents of the ugly note you sent me? It is full of venomous thoughts, clothed in novel-like phrases and villainous, spiteful, and literary insults, such as you newspaper men throw at each other. It is, no doubt, the revenge your vanity is taking for having been offended, even though the unconscious offender is a woman you pretend to love. How many ugly, dark recesses are to be found in your souls, *messieurs les célèbres!*

No matter! I care nothing for your note. I laugh at your innuendoes, your insults and your literary ability. In spite of your talent, your celebrity, your grand manners, and your stinging sentences, you are a child that must be scolded, but not too harshly, for fear of throwing him into hysterics.

Come now and take your scolding, you naughty *romancier*.

May I ask you to tell me what crime I have committed against you? As far as I can see, my only offence was due to carelessness, which made me send a note to you that was meant for Captain Lartigues, while he received a very gracious one telling him I was thankful to him for having been so unusually "brilliant at my last dinner party." He took everything for granted. He accepted the thanks and was very grateful to me for having extended them! He naïvely replied: "How strange! It seems to me, I am always the same!" Dear fellow, perspicacity is not his greatest fault! You, a psychologist by profession, at once saw the mistake. I grant you my letter was too tender, and I blush, my friend, to think you read the tender phrases which were not meant for you. Now, how can I help it? Love is rather profuse and does not weigh methodically its endearments, and since chance revealed my secret to you, I will frankly tell you that I am very much in love with Captain Lartigues.

In love! Now, I have said it. I have confessed my crime. I, therefore, am disgraced—I, therefore, deserve all the cutting things you showered upon me when you sent back my stray letter.

Your note was truly a great success. "A woman who receives such a letter from a friend will, if she has any heart, feel the tears rush to her eyes

in spite of herself when she comes to the last line."

I added this precious autograph to those I previously received from you, but before putting them all out of sight I re-read those I had received from you before my mistake.

The reading proved enlightening and wholesome, I assure you. If any tears still lurked in the corners of my eyes they were quickly dried before I had quite finished the reading of the past month's letters. I was laughing aloud and to myself. Can you guess the reason why? Every one of your last month's letters demanded, insistently, I say, that I be to you what I am—to your profound disgust—to Monsieur Lartigues. Yes, indeed, my *romancier*, you were simply suggesting—and constantly too—that I should become *yours*. Furthermore, you were not appealing to my heart in particular, but offered as an inducement pleasures unknown to married life. You boasted in a very discreet and witty fashion that you would not love like any *ordinary* lover. You knew, so you said, mysterious incantations that would increase our love and enjoyment.

My poor Pierre, you were praising *your wares*—if I may so express myself—and you were doing it cleverly. I am convinced, however, that the self-praises were true, and that you must be what

you claim to be—an *artist* in love-making. Can not you understand how amusing it was for me to see you turning suddenly into a *bitter moralist*? Taking me to task for my womanly weakness because Monsieur Lartigues was receiving the *favours* you were begging with such persistence?

I know very well the excuses you would give. Monsieur Lartigues is not a great man. He is not even a man with brains. I cannot help it. If he had *your wit* and *your genius* I would like him none the less, but although I enjoy your wit and genius so much, I do not like them in the same way I like Monsieur Lartigues. Why should this make you angry? There is nothing offensive in what I say. You artists are constantly committing the error of thinking that we women must be in love with you simply because we are women and admire you.

No, indeed, a thousand times no! Our admiration for genius does not force upon us such extreme punishment.

We spontaneously separate your merits from your charms; something stronger than our will determines what relations will exist between the one and the other.

I know this is not a general rule. Some foolish and vain women are not satisfied until they have brought to their feet the five Academies. Are such women worth having? Their hearts are opened to

you as freely as some would let you write on their fans or in their albums. A woman of *some temperament* and sound mind does not at once lose her head over the author of a beautiful book she is reading, nor over the composer of some rare music, nor over the artist who paints a masterpiece. She falls in love with a man for no apparent reason, *just because he is himself*.

I love Captain Lartigues because his looks, his voice, his manners, his disposition, please me; because he came into my life at the most opportune moment; at the time when my husband's affections seemed to turn elsewhere. I love him because in some way this man with no more than an ordinary mind has been able to persuade me that he loves *me* passionately. My only excuse for this *faux pas* is that there shall be no other.

Must I for that reason give up the society of a man as famous as the novelist Pierre Delestang, even though he makes love to me? No doubt you will boldly answer: "Yes," and begin a long dissertation on the subject of woman's duplicity, the way they lead a man on to hope and to wish for something he will never attain! Come, my dear Pierre, tell me, is this *real life* or merely romance? If it is merely romance, I'll listen to you. You may describe your suffering and my perversity in such a way that I will have no fault to find, have noth-

ing to answer. If it is *real life*, I'll interrupt you immediately, for your heart has not suffered for a single moment, dear friend; it is simply your vanity that has been hurt because some one else has succeeded where you have failed. That is all. Really, deep in your heart Monsieur Lartigues does not worry you—and because, above all, your greatness has not been sufficient to attract me.

Such is, indeed, your most tender spot. Your literary vanity is hurt. Your feminine victims in society are dear to you only because your pride demands that you should have as many as your colleague, Monsieur, just as you must write a novel that will have a greater sale than some one else's, or a drama that will have a longer run. You are a literary Don Juan and you would willingly advertise the fact that two thousand copies of your last novel have been sold.

After all, you are right—since your conquests in society come through your literary success—to think as you do. However, the reasoning of your vanity is wrong when you find yourself in the presence of a woman who does not mistake literary admiration for sensuous desires; or a woman who is able to admire a book without thinking immediately that she must belong to the author. Your vanity should not suffer because of my indifference, for you know, sir, that none of the beauties who

have *avored* you have any higher appreciation of your talent than I have. The only difference between them and me is, that I prefer admiring you in my own way.

Have I not made this clear to you? I hope so. If you are the man of sense I think you are, come this evening and beg to be forgiven. In order to make the thing easier to your beloved vanity, know that it is being reported that you are my lover. This piece of news has been given me by some obliging friend of mine and I understood at once that no denial on my part could change matters.

Is my *romancier* pleased? Will it not be another conquest to be added to the *mille-é-tre*? Truly it is only a fictitious one, but it is said that novelists do not mind such things!

EARLY MORNING MAIL

(*Courrier Matinal*)

Eleven in the morning; a small house, Rue Rembrandt. Madame d'Arteny, a plump brunette, thirty years of age, is seated in her boudoir before a writing-table, covering a sheet of grey-blue paper with careful and aristocratic handwriting.

YOU must not hold against me the fact that our walk together has left me delightfully and painfully disturbed. Understand me, dear friend, it was so sweet to walk at your side, my arm in yours, through the pathways of the far-away park, where we were sure not to meet a single face we knew, trying to find thus the illusion that we *legitimately* belong to each other. You are such a delightful magician. Your words of tenderness intoxicated me—everything was combining to make me forget that duty called me yonder! Did my lips utter a promise of which I was hardly conscious? I beg you will not hold me to it. You love me—you say it and I believe you—do not abuse the power which those few words, drawn from me by the surroundings, have given you. If you could

only see me as I am to-day, you would surely take pity upon your friend.

All my duties—which were forgotten during our walk to the observatory of Montsouris—rushed back upon me as I entered the house. My husband was waiting for me—he has a noble and generous heart, and I never will be able to deceive him—he spoke of his plan to rent a villa at the seashore, in Normandy, so as to be able to leave Paris with the children early in the season. The doctor advises it. He, poor man, will remain here alone all summer long, tied to his business, and he does so loathe having to live the life of a bachelor.

After that came my son, René, home from school, desirous to show me a good report, of which he was justly proud. He kissed me on the very spot your lips had accidentally rested while in the carriage on our way back. I felt very remorseful.

Then came my daughter, holding on to her governess' hand, looking pale and delicate—so charming to listen to when she talks in her language, half French, half English.

My whole life as an honest woman was meeting me on every turn. I love my husband. I love my children—I must tell you what I did then.

I ran to my room and with tears in my eyes I scribbled you a short note, saying: "We must not

see each other again, Maxime. I feel my liking for you is too great to endure long, should I continue to think so much of you—to meet you—the honest woman I am, have been, and will be. *Adieu*; do not hate me. I could not bear it! I really never could make you happy. Therefore, be glad I am keeping you away from me.”

This is what my note was saying, Maxime, and you should have received it instead of this one.

After having written it I felt calmer during the rest of the evening. However, upon reading it over this morning I felt too fond of you to cause you so much sorrow. I tore up this cruel note and resolved not to dictate what you should do, but leave it all to your judgment. I am now in your hands and at your mercy. I know you are a gentleman and a good man. Be stronger than I, Maxime. You will have strength for both of us, will you not, since I have none and our hearts alone belong to one another?

Do answer me quickly! I do need your letters so much! But please do not say in them anything I ought not to hear.

The letter continues in this same tone for six long pages. Madame d'Arteny signs it by the abbreviation of her first name—"Gab"—reads it over and as she proceeds a light of satisfaction

dawns in her face. She folds the letter and addresses it to:

*Monsieur Maxime Renouard,
Attaché au Cabinet du Ministre des Affaires
Étrangères,
8 Rue Montalivet, E. V.*

After a few moments of thought she takes another sheet and scribbles much more rapidly, and in an entirely different style of handwriting, the following lines:

Your note is received, and I appreciate the delicacy that prompted it! You dared address your letter to my own residence! You speak in your note of things that would leave no doubt in the mind of—you know who—if he should happen to read it. Truly, my dear, your tone is enough to cure me forever of the weakness you have worked for three years, were I not already cured. Let the past bury its dead, however. We'll never mention it again.

You are willing to return my letters, you say, on the condition that we shall see each other "every now and then." "Every now and then" is charming, indeed. It seems you do not care to go on seeing me regularly—but, of course, when you have a free afternoon you do not know what to do with you will condescend. Thank you! You are

too kind! I am not fond of the filling-in process, nor of being picked up and thrown aside whenever it suits your fancy.

When a man begins to think he does not care to see me, except "every now and then," I do not care to see him at all. Therefore, let us break off right here and now, without any trouble or scandal, if it can be done. You have some letters of mine I want. I have a few confidential notes of yours concerning certain financial enterprises—did you forget about *them*? Just imagine what your constituents would say if some fine morning they should read these letters in the papers. It is evidently a case of give and take. The situation will be clear after that; and I will be very glad to show you a smiling face whenever we meet in society.

However, excepting for one thing, I'll tell you directly—I do not wish to meet you soon.

I shall leave Paris early this year—my husband uses for a pretext the necessity, the health of my little girl, Valentine—forces upon us to go to the seashore as early as the month of June, to have more time to give to his edifying annual bachelor life while we are away. I request you, therefore, not to come to the house between now and the time set for my departure. If you will add to that time the months we will be away, nearly half a year will go by without our seeing each other. Is that not

sufficient time to turn our common memories into a legend?

One word more relating to business! I know you like business to be short and precise. It is absolutely necessary for the settlement of our affairs. I have just received the quarterly bill from Doucet. You have always said to me: "I mean to pay all the extra expenses your dressing will cost you as long as you are doing it to please me, and it is a credit to me." Whom do you think should pay this bill? I leave it to you to decide.

It seems to me we could part amicably, and if you are reasonable, I, myself, will willingly come for the last time, since you wish to see me, and get the receipted bill in our old loving home, *Rue Clément-Marot*.

À vous, en bon camarade,

GABRIELLE.

Madame d'Arteny puts her letter in an envelope, on which she writes the following address:

*Baron Silverberg, député,
9, Avenue d'Antin, E. V.*

and rings for her maid.

GENEVIÈVE'S DIARY (*Le Cahier de Geneviève*)

I

May Twentieth.

WHY am I sad and restless? Why is my heart so filled with black shadows, as Mother Superieur Reine des Anges used to say, in the happy days when I knew no greater care than those of childhood; when I had no husband nor—what was I going to write?—All the joy I get now-a-days comes from my child, a little darling, nineteen months old, my little boy René.

Mother Reine des Anges had given the name of "black shadows" to the vague and obscure things that weigh upon one's heart without knowing whence they come and what they are. She also had discovered a method of fighting them. This is how it was done:

You retired to your room, pen or pencil in hand; spread before you was a beautiful piece of white paper. You would then reflect. After a steady search the black shadows were always discovered, each in a separate corner, deep down in your heart,

the real cause of your vague sadness would come forth, little by little, and be revealed.

As you found a black shadow you would take note of it as clearly as possible and number it. When all that could be found were written on the paper, you would then try to find a remedy for them. You tried to resign yourself—prayed over it, and in this way calm and good cheer would finally be restored.

Alas! as I advance in life—I have not gone very far—I see why life is so hopeless, so full of pitfalls and misery. It is because I have given up the wholesome discipline of the convent days. How much stronger it would make one if you could apply it to life at home and in society.

However, it is never too late to mend. Let us try the remedy of Mother Supérieur Reine des Anges. We will apply it especially to myself. Who am I? I am Geneviève Olivier, ex-pupil and boarder of the Convent of the Sacred Heart of Blois, to-day bearing the title of Comtesse Raoul de Boistelle, having taken unto myself three years ago a naughty, very naughty and lovable man for a husband. I am now twenty years old and mother of a lovely baby, whom I worship.

Before me now is the prescribed white sheet of paper. I take a brand-new pen and sit down to write, having first bolted my door.

Baby is asleep. His nurse is with him. Raoul is at the club, or so, at least, we will suppose him to be at this hour, this Sunday afternoon.

I shall not be disturbed. I may begin my search.

MY BLACK SHADOWS

No. 1. It is Sunday, a sad day, most particularly sad between lunch and dinner. It is hot—abominably hot—and that makes me very uncomfortable.

No. 2. Baby has a pimple at the corner of his mouth. I have been anxious about him for a week. I used to be so proud of his health, but for the past week he looks pale and feverish. His nurse says he does not sleep.

No. 3. Whitefern has made a fiasco of my travelling suit after having tried it on ten times. He finally sent it to me this morning while I was asleep, evidently so that I could not try it on before the girl who brought it. I am a sight in it; I look like a female coachman in the moving pictures. All that is necessary to make the picture complete is the hat and whip. How very troublesome! My leaving for the country will be delayed.

No. 4. But the real grief, the blackest of black shadows, the only one which really counts, is that I am jealous, not stupidly jealous without cause;

not simply for the sake of tormenting my husband and myself! I have a good reason, a very good one.

To begin with, Raoul no longer loves me. If I died he would be sorry, I think, but he would not mourn very long. I can already see that I bore him; that he prefers to be where I am not. It breaks my heart to think of such things, but the method of Mother Reine des Anges is very exacting and requires a sincere scrutiny of the black shadows.

To be no longer loved by my husband is bad enough, but that is not all. He loves some one else. I do not know exactly who is taking him away from me nor how much he is interested. Oh, if I only knew! One thing I am certain of, and that is, that some one is drawing him away. My suspicions rest between a young married woman and a young girl.

A young girl! Can she be called a young girl in the same sense of the word as it was applied to us schoolgirls, so innocent, so timid, so reserved?

Mademoiselle Lucie de Giverny is one of those ultra-fashionable Parisiennes who wants to introduce amongst us the American customs. Mlle. de Giverny drives out alone; is seen alone at the Salon with a gentleman who shows her the paintings! Proprieties are not offended as long as her

mother's carriage awaits them outside. At a ball she selects the partner she likes, takes him into a corner and there alone with him flirts outrageously! Yesterday at the Avrezacs' she chose my husband, and he wondered why I became hysterical in the carriage on the way home!

The young married woman, Madame Delaveaux, is the wife of an artist. She is an exquisite blonde with pink and white complexion, very pretty, too pretty in fact.

Why do we receive in our set people who do not belong in it like this Madame Delaveaux, for instance? It is said she was her husband's model before she became his wife, and yet they are both received everywhere, he because he has talent, she because every man likes her.

She has made love to Raoul—every woman makes love to him—Dieu! I wish he were less fascinating. I should love him just the same, but every woman would not try to take him away from me.

Madame Delaveaux had been making love to my husband for a fortnight when all at once they seemed to avoid each other, and I felt very happy thinking they did not care for each other. When I told mamma so—she always calls my attention to Raoul's misdeeds—she said I was mistaken.

"Take care," she said. "They no longer flirt

openly; therefore they do it secretly. Keep an eye on your husband."

"Then he is not flirting with Mademoiselle de Giverny," I said.

"Look out for her, too," my mother replied.

I did what my mother told me to do. I distrust Mademoiselle de Giverny. I distrust Raoul; consequently I am very unhappy and suffer terribly.

These are the black shadows I found in my heart after a thorough search.

REMEDIES FOR MY BLACK SHADOWS

1. This can easily be remedied. Giving orders to the servants to keep my shutters closed will do it.

2. The baby? The doctor said it was nothing, but as there is an epidemic of varioloid in the neighborhood, I will send for a specialist.

3. My spoiled suit—I will simply refuse to take it and order another. Whitefern is very accommodating. He will have time to finish it before I go.

4. Concerning my husband, oh, Mother Reine des Anges, do come to my rescue! Inspire me! Help me! as you used to do during your life.

I cannot stand by and see my husband's love taken from me without making an effort to hold it. I am very much in love with Raoul. I am his,

heart and soul. I am pretty and many times since our marriage men have shown me much attention. Shall I flirt to make him jealous? No, I will not stoop to such a method to keep my husband's love! What am I to do against my two enemies, Made-moiselle de Giverny and Madame Delaveaux? A scene in public would do more harm than good, and although Raoul is flirting outrageously, he is apparently not neglecting me. To accept things as they are, is beyond my power. I will not. I am no saint! I cannot bear to be deceived. I have a perfect right to his faithfulness. I must find out the true state of affairs, but how?

The other day a circular came by mail addressed to me Comtesse de Boistelle—and I opened it unsuspectingly before my husband. It was from an agency who undertakes to watch husbands for the sake of the wives and *vice versa*.

I held the circular out to him. After a glance he crumpled it angrily and threw it in the fire. He ought to know that I would never resort to such means. I will never have him watched by detectives! I'll do it *myself*. He need have no fear I'll open his mail or his desk; but since a woman must follow her husband, the husband should not go where he cannot take his wife. Let him look out! Maybe some day when he goes to a rendezvous—his eyes brilliant with anticipation as they some-

times are—he will find his wife instead of the woman he is looking for.

I must have been meditating a long time. Through the window everything in the garden appears beautiful under the rays of the setting sun, and Paris seems far, far away.

How many apparently good reasons I have to enjoy life! Kind parents, a charming husband, a beautiful child, every slight wish of mine gratified. Yes, I would enjoy life but for two pairs of lovely eyes, the one pair blue, the other pair black. I would put out those eyes if I could do so without making their owners suffer and without causing pain to those who have a right to love them.

I love my husband. He must be mine and mine only!

II

May Twenty-sixth.

I am all alone this evening, as has happened so many times this year. Where is Raoul? I did not even ask him where he was going, knowing full well he would answer: "I am going to the club." I must do him the credit to say he asked me to go to the Avrezacs,' but I refused. I am certain he is there because *they* will be there.

I have told the nurse to go out and I am sitting by baby's little bed. He is perfectly adorable when he is asleep, and it is all I can do to refrain from kissing him for fear of waking him up—for when disturbed in his first nap master baby flatly refuses to fall asleep again until it is time for him to take his second one. Next June he will be nineteen months old. He is very tall for his age, and I do hope with all my heart he will grow to be the biggest, healthiest, smartest of all the children I know. Pride and egotism are allowed to motherhood.

He has been better lately, although the doctor comes to see him regularly every day. I finally succeeded in drawing out of the doctor that the child was all right.

When I think of the possibility of losing him I almost lose my mind.

While I am sitting with my son, Raoul is begging Mademoiselle de Giverny to grant him a *tête-à-tête*, or else he is asking Madame Delaveaux for a rendezvous.

I have come to the conclusion the flirtation has gone further than the *innocent* stage. My personal experience, and above all, mamma's advice, have dispelled my former naïveté. "When your husband flirts," said mother, "there is only between

flirtation and adultery the distance of a material possibility."

I loathe the word flirtation.

To help pass the hours of watching by the baby's bedside I went into Raoul's den for the papers. Being a most careless and trusting husband, Raoul had left his keys in the lock of his desk. Was I tempted? I believe not.

I left the room, however; rang for my husband's valet; asked him to go and bring the papers to me. I know as well as though I saw him do it that he locked the desk and took away the keys. The man had been with Raoul before his marriage and I know he dislikes me.

Anyway, here are the papers: *Le Figaro*, *Le Gaulois*, *La Libre Parole*. I do not usually indulge in journalistic literature. Those that discuss serious questions bore me. Those publishing stories our brothers and husbands find amusing I do not understand. This one, says Raoul, is usually read by brokers, *cercleux* clubmen and the *demi-monde*. Let us try what reading it will do for a serious woman, the wife of a *cercleux*.

"I learn that Mlle. Irma Descloziers, Marguerite de Bourgogne, Miss Champagne, etc., were seen at the Bois."

Twelve lines given to them. Who is interested? Their friends?

Politics. Let's pass on. The events of the day. Mathematical puzzles. Personals. This is amusing! A great many comedies and dramas appear in these few lines.

T.—I spent an hour pyrm knpt vyq hrsm three of which were quystg. Ogts will almost be a wytmposrwmd if I have not rec. try to pqvn.-phule.

Fus—Thanks 2 let. writ. H.A.A.S. Sed.S.V.P.

Map—Will meet you at three P. M. CLEO.

Why what is this I see? Suddenly I felt as though my heart had stopped! The paper fell unheeded to the floor and I nearly lost consciousness. Having slightly recovered from the shock, though weak, I picked up the paper and re-read with difficulty the following lines:

R.—Joy! To-morrow night. Saturday. Succeeded in getting away from this horrid country place. Will be at the chosen nest at 10 P. M. Come if you mean to be good, not otherwise. SUZE.

How did I know at once that *R.* is my husband and *Suze* is Suzanne Delaveaux? I did not know

she was away from Paris! I even said jokingly to Raoul this very day: "You will see the beautiful Suzanne where you are going." He only looked at me without saying a word. Did he not know she was away or was he making fun of me? I know not, but I am certain this personal signed "Suze" is for Raoul. The more I read over the fateful lines, the more I am convinced.

What I feared has come true then. There is somewhere in Paris a place where the man to whom I gave all that——

The last words give me hope. She does not love him. Otherwise she never would have said: "Do not come unless you mean to be good." What can the wretch want of him?

Baby's nurse is coming back. I'll send her away. I'll sleep near baby to-night. I could not bear to see Raoul. Here, close to my son, I may have the strength not to despair. God grant it!

III

It is raining, and the depressing and sultry atmosphere is in perfect harmony with my condition of mind. Everything is coming at once.

During the latter part of the night baby showed signs of restlessness and fever. He is scarcely any better this morning and I am awaiting anxiously

the arrival of Doctor Robin. Oh, God! this is almost more than I can bear, my child, my husband.

Doubt has now become a certainty. I asked Raoul this morning as quietly as I could:

"Was Madame Delaveaux at the party last night?" He hesitated before replying:

"I don't know—no—she wasn't."

I insisted: "Has she left Paris?"

"Why, my dear," he replied impatiently, "how should I know? Am I her keeper? Never mention her name to me again. You do not like her. I don't see why. She has always been kind to you."

I was angry with him and left him without saying anything to him about baby's condition.

So be it. Let him have a good time outside of his home if he wants to! I alone will watch! He has forfeited his right to his son.

Toward ten o'clock a man brought a band-box to the house addressed to Madame de Boistelle, 13, *Rue Vézelay*. As I live at *Faubourg Saint-Honoré* and always give my name as Comtesse de Boistelle the mistake was evident. I sent for the man and told him I had bought nothing at his store.

"Well," he said, "we thought there might be some mistake, but the *Comte* ordered it himself, and there was no one at *Rue Vézelay*." At that

moment I turned so very pale that the man stopped. He understood!

"Take it back," I said, and I ran to my own room. This is the way chance took to reveal the place of my husband's rendezvous. He is to meet Madame Delaveaux to-night and I know the address. What shall I do? Is it not my duty to go and prevent my husband from doing wrong? I am tempted to tell Raoul when he comes to dinner: "I know everything," and also to tell him how this knowledge was forced upon me.

Of course he will deny everything. He has learned to lie lately. Better say nothing and go to-night to *Rue Vézelay* and wait for him outside. He will not be able to deny then.

But what a dreadful thing. No matter—I must.

Next Day, 2 P. M.

The doctor has been here. He said nothing reassuring. Baby is ill. His temperature grows higher every minute. Every now and then I hear his tearful little voice say: "Mamma, cold." He is shivering and yet his body is moist.

I asked the doctor to tell me the truth, whether it was serious or not. He shook his head doubtfully and said gravely:

"I don't know for the present. It is only fever.

It may leave him as quickly as it came. If it does not, why it will turn into some of the diseases children generally have—measles, scarlet fever, varioloid.”

Varioloid! That is what frightens me. I looked through the paper this morning and saw the epidemic was subsiding.

God has taken so many little ones away from their poor mothers! Will He spare me mine?

At lunch to-day Raoul and I spoke little. He was very kind, trying to make me forget his ill-humour of the morning, or perhaps what he intends to do this evening.

He asked: “Is baby better?”

“No,” I replied. “Worse. He has had a bad night and I am very anxious about him.”

I was unable to keep back the tears that came to my eyes. Raoul got up to kiss me. Thinking of the other woman, I drew back instinctively and his lips only touched my hair. He sat down again. He had turned very pale and shortly after resuming his seat his tumbler broke at the stem.

Lunch ended in silence, and while Raoul lighted his cigar I went back to baby.

I am a coward. I cannot bear to lose husband or child. God give me strength! I would rather die than to have Raoul faithless. I would rather

die than lose my son! But if I must choose—oh, God! I will give up Raoul's love to save my child's life.

IV.

TALLOIRES, June Eighteenth.

Everything is peaceful and bright around our villa, which is asleep in the rays of the sun. The mountains appear blue and white. The lake is beautiful—Paris seems so far away!

Paris is indeed far away, and so is yesterday's past. The cruel hours of suffering which made me wish for death are all over! Life begins brightly and smoothly again. I hardly dare to believe that all my troubles are over.

The last lines written in my diary are very desperate ones. They were written beside baby's bed when he was suffering dreadfully, moaning constantly in his sleep.

Toward four o'clock there was a knock at the door. Joseph, my husband's valet, came in.

"What is it, Joseph?"

"His lordship wants to know if *Monsieur le Vicomte* is better."

Monsieur le Vicomte is my son.

"Did not his lordship go out?"

"No, my lady, his lordship is in his rooms and wishes to be informed of the arrival of the doctor."

"Very well, Joseph, the nurse will let him know."

So my husband had not gone out. He was anxious about the baby's health. He wanted to be there when the doctor came. His solicitude irritated me. I was so angry with him that I did not want him to come near René. He should, at least, leave me alone with the child.

The doctor came soon after five o'clock. I sent the maid for Raoul. He came in looking so different from his usual independent self that I felt sorry for him. He was really suffering.

"Nothing new. We must wait," said the doctor, putting down baby's head on the pillow. "You must wait; be ready for an emergency. Something will surely develop. Have you a good physician in the neighborhood?"

"Why do you ask?"

"In case he should be needed."

"Yes, there is a Doctor Guil."

"I'll write him a note and recommend you to him. Send for him at any hour of the night."

The doctor went away and Raoul and I were left together. I paid no attention to him whatever. Raoul finally said in a strained voice:

"I will dine at home this evening."

I read him like an open book. Had Raoul said this no later than yesterday I would have been be-

side myself with joy. To-day I did not care, and coldly replied:

"You may if you like. I will not come down."

Our eyes met and he realized that I knew.

"As you wish," he answered.

I was standing before the baby's bed, partly concealing him. Raoul did not venture nearer, and after a moment's hesitation left the room. Then the long hours of waiting and watching began again.

Finally baby fell asleep, and overcome by the moral and physical strain of the last few days, I, too, dozed off. A slight noise awakened me. My husband was leaning over the cradle, candle in hand, looking intently at the child. He was dressed ready to go out. I looked at the clock. It was nine-thirty. He is going, I thought. In half an hour he will be in Madame Delaveaux's arms. For an instant I struggled with the desire to go and be there first, but the struggle did not last long. My place is here! I am ready to make the sacrifice of my husband's love, if that is to be the price of baby's life.

Suddenly Raoul cried:

"Geneviève!"

I arose. Baby was at stake. I was sure of that.

"Well," what is it?"

"Look!"

He was pointing to some large red spots on the face and arms of the child.

"Oh, God! What is the matter? Surely not varioloid?" And forgetting everything I threw my arms around my husband.

Raoul went at once for the doctor. It seemed an eternity before his return, bringing the doctor with him.

Fully five minutes passed while the doctor examined René without speaking. We waited anxiously.

"Well, doctor," said the *Comte*. "Is it very serious?"

"I think not, but I am not quite certain."

"Is it varioloid?" I asked breathlessly.

"I think not."

He said this calmly, quite unconscious he was putting new life into me. I fell into Raoul's arms when I heard him say, "Chicken-pox." Perhaps my son was safe! This great joy proved too much for me, and I lost consciousness.

When I came to myself I was on the bed. My husband was at my side. I asked about René.

"He is better. It is, after all, a slight case of varioloid. He is all broken out; looks very ugly; but the danger is past. The nurse is with him. But you—how are you?"

"I? I am very well."

I tried to get up, but was so very exhausted that I fell back upon the pillow with a sigh.

"Poor child!" said Raoul, taking my hand.

During the silence that followed my thoughts were busy. I said to myself: Raoul is here. He must have returned from the *Rue Vézelay*, or else he did not go at all. I could not refrain from asking when he returned.

"Why, with the doctor. I have stayed at your side ever since you have been lying here."

His face came quite close to mine. I murmured: "Well?"

He understood and replied very low:

"You are the only woman I love, and you must forgive me."

Never since the days of our honeymoon had he given me such a kiss.

As soon as baby could be moved we came to Talloires, our country place. I am very happy. On the morning following that horrible night I saw a telegram saying:

"I waited for you yesterday two hours in a stupid room. I will have nothing to do with ill-bred people.

"SUZE."

Concerning Mademoiselle de Giverny? She is to be married in a few weeks.

LES YEUX

Mademoiselle Antoinette Legrand

To Monsieur le Vicomte Hervé de Laverrière:

THERE is no doubt in writing to you that my name at the end of this letter will not tell you anything, will recall nothing. So many adventures must happen to you.

Although I am wrong to call what passed between us an adventure—for you it was nothing at all, because the next minute you had forgotten the very young girl in black whom you followed one evening, the eighteenth of last May, from the corner of the *Rue Boissy d' Anglais* to the *Place des Pyramides*. Do you not remember?

You spoke to me there and we walked together up to the *Rue Montorgueil*, near my home. You were in evening dress, white necktie, patent leather shoes and a black Macferlane, lined with satin. Oh, I remember it all well enough! It seemed so funny, so charming, to be with you in the street, chatting as if we knew each other! I was confused, but I was happy.

I thought: Since he walks beside me before everybody in broad daylight it must be that he

thinks I am not too homely, neither too badly dressed. And after you had left me, after having kissed me, I knew that in spite of what I had said I would go to the rendezvous that you gave me for the next day, to your rooms in *Rue de la Terrace*. Oh! you cannot imagine all that went through my head and heart during the time which followed!

When I was telling you during our walk that I had no sweetheart, that I had always been good and had never wished to be anything else, you were laughing, and you would stop to look at me in my eyes, and you were saying to yourself: "*Good! Really! A little Parisienne like you? With such eyes and such a mouth—good at nineteen?*" And I could see that you only half believed me. Well, it was true. I swear it still, and you would surely believe me if you were near me at this moment, a moment when one does not wish to joke or lie.

Ah! Monsieur Hervé, I am very ill—I, who was so well all spring and summer. Bronchitis had come over me as soon as the cold weather came. I have never been very strong. Then our work, it is terrible for delicate lungs. We try on one after another an evening dress, a fur coat, and the awful heat of the furnace and the change of doors opened suddenly upon us! Besides, always standing, turning round like a dummy—that is what we are called. Moreover—but I must not write sad

things. I am not angry with you—not at all, not at all. I only have something to ask you which would give me great pleasure. You will not refuse me when you have read my letter.

The evening of the rendezvous (I had said no, no; but you understood that it meant yes) I had left the *atelier* one hour sooner than usual and quickly ran home to dress. I said to my sister that I was going to the theatre with friends. She knows I am not frivolous, so she had no suspicion. I assure you I was quite pretty when I came to wait for you at nine o'clock at the corner of *Rue de la Terrasse*. I no longer wore my little black gown. I had a pretty blue tailored costume, copied after a model that we have made for an English princess! I came to see you again, so happy that I had no remorse left, I assure you.

(I have thought about it since, and in cold blood, too. You might have done with me as you wished. We know that one cannot be good all one's life, and it is good luck if one marries one's first sweetheart. You understand Monsieur Hervé, that I did not expect you to marry me. I knew that you would soon be tired and would leave me, and you would marry a rich young lady; but that didn't matter—I was happy, just the same, to think that you would love me for a while and that I should be to you what I had never been to any one, as

if you were my husband. You pleased me so much! You did not imagine the impression you made upon me. We see so many gentlemen at our house, who accompany their wives or friends, but no one has your face, your pretty teeth and your eyes—especially your eyes! While I was waiting for you at the *Rue de la Terrace* I was thinking of your eyes, and I was thinking also that if I should dare when we would be alone and I would kiss them—kiss them!

I waited one hour, two hours. I waited until past midnight, watching the corner of *Avenue Villiers* and the boulevard. I waited so long that people evidently took me for what I was not. Some gentlemen approached me and said unpleasant things, and I did not know what to do to put them aside, because I did not dare to go farther for fear of missing you. Finally, when it was half after midnight, when omnibuses have ceased to run, I came home so that my sister should not be anxious.

My heart was heavy, Monsieur Hervé, and I assure you that once in bed I did not sleep much and that I wept a great deal. In vain did I reason with myself: He has been prevented by his family—business; he could not warn me, since he does not know my address. I was a little ashamed to have been alone at the rendezvous. I thought: If he wanted to see me very much he could have found

some means to join me. One may be good; one sees well how men are when they are very much interested in a woman. Then I was unhappy because I did not know how we could find each other again. I had not given my address; I knew your name and your club, but I never should have dared to write to you.

After much thought, I surmised that if you cared a little for me you would manage to find me, since you knew where my work is and at what hour I go out.

For many weeks, Monsieur Hervé, I have gone to your house, watching for your coming, and I went up the *Rue de Rivoli* slowly. I have gone over the way we walked together carefully. Never have I found you. You were no longer thinking about me. I had only to forget you, *n'est-ce pas?* That's what I said to myself—but I could not! The more the time went on the more I thought about you and the more I was unhappy.

The first evening I had thought you were charming and I had been happy when you kissed me under the *porte-cochère*. Now because I desired so much to see you without being able to succeed I had such need to see you, that I understood quite well I loved you!

Do not laugh, Monsieur Hervé; it would be wrong. In your world people are distracted by so

much amusement that they have no time to listen to their heart! As for us, we have only the *atelier* and a home, which is not always a happy one. If now and then we go to the theatre it's a great event. Then during the day, while we try on *chemisettes* and *manteaux*, or at night in bed, when sleep does not come, there is plenty of time to be unhappy thinking about a man. I have thought about you so much that I have lost all taste for life. Before knowing you I was cheerful. I was content with my luck, had confidence in the future without quite knowing why. Now I desire nothing, no longer have any appetite and cannot sleep.

Would you believe that the last two weeks of June I have waited for you every evening on the sidewalk facing your club? I have seen you eight times, Monsieur Hervé. Never have I been able to speak to you; very seldom are you alone, or you would enter your carriage immediately. Then I trembled so much that I would not have been able, I believe, to walk or talk.

Toward the end of June you left for the country. I saw a notice of it in the *Gaulois*, which they take at the *atelier*. "*M. le Vicomte Hervé de Laverrière, au Château d'Estussan (Vendée).*" I was more quiet during your absence, imagine! I knew you were not in Paris and there were no means of seeing you. I said to myself: He will come back

in the autumn. Both of us are not old; it would be strange if we should never meet again. And I was right, because I met you the day after your return to Paris. I will tell you how. You must not be angry with me, Monsieur Hervé, because I am so unhappy.

The newspaper had also told me that you were back in Paris with many other people who have châteaux.

About half-past nine I waited for you again opposite your club. There is a fate against us surely, because I had been there but three minutes when a private carriage stopped before the club. There was a lady in the carriage. A little *chasseur* came immediately to her and went in again to the club. It must not hurt you, Monsieur Hervé, if I tell you that I did not think this lady very pretty or very young, and that her gown is not one of those we make for women *comme il faut*. Finally you came to her; before entering the carriage you said to the coachman: "*Rue de la Terrasse!*" It went through to my heart! Truly you had told me: "I have an apartment there I only use for rendez-vous!" Then I knew. Stupid! Until that evening I had not been jealous. I do not know why. I should have suspected that you were not a saint. But to have seen the person and to know the place! Oh! it did hurt me, it did hurt me! I do not know

how I got back to the house. I went to bed immediately. Did I take cold or was it the shock? I was taken ill that night with fever, then my throat, and I coughed so much that I have been in bed a whole month. I have not been up since and I fear never will again.

You understand, indeed, that I do not accuse you of my illness. I have never had a very strong constitution. Every winter I cough a great deal, and what is happening now would probably have happened some day or other. It has only come a little faster because of you, although without any wish of yours. It is not very cheerful, *n'est-ce pas?* to go at twenty without having had much happiness. I should like to ask you something which would give me great pleasure and will cost you very little trouble. It would be to come to me to say good-bye, since I cannot go to you. Oh, there will be no trouble or difficulty; you will speak to no one but me. Three floors up, number fifteen, *Rue Montorgueil*. Ring and ask for Mlle. Antoinette Legrand (of my sister, who will open the door to you). She will leave us alone. I have changed a great deal. I am very thin, but my face is still *mignonne*, almost as it used to be, it seems to me. You will talk to me; I shall look at you, shall hear your voice. It seems that I shall go happier if you will allow me to kiss your eyes."

ONE ROOM OR TWO?
(*La Question du Lit*)

Madame Duclozac to Madame Anquetin
From the Château of Serbat:

MY DEAR OLD FRIEND—

I come to you as I so often have before because you are the only one who can help me in this trouble. Nothing threatens my husband or myself, but I desire to talk to you about him. You know that Maurice and I are quite congenial, although our life has ceased to be a perpetual honeymoon. You must remember that three years have elapsed since we returned from our wedding trip. However, our love has behaved itself like a good legitimate love, approved by civil and religious authorities. It has lasted the usual time, that is to say, from the night of the wedding to the night of our home-coming. Then Maurice and I agreed to put our love away in a jewel case—if I may so say—and from time to time we bring it out like a priceless gem, polish it a little to ascertain whether it is still in good condition and, when need be, wear it for a few moments. Then it is stowed away again until the next occasion calls for it.

Need I add that both Maurice and I enjoy the inestimable delight of separate beds? We each have our bedroom, dressing-room and bath. Maurice said very judiciously once: "It would be a pity to crowd ourselves into one room when your father has spent eight hundred thousand francs in building this mansion." Therefore, for the last two years and a half I have lived very peacefully, resuming all the good habits of my girlhood.

I have had the opportunity to roam about in my night robe until a late hour, arranging my own pet belongings, reading over old letters, sometimes writing, or when in bed turning over the pages of a favorite novel until ready to sleep. The light out, I would really begin to appreciate the luxury of being alone, being able to lie lengthwise, crosswise, curled up, or in any position I chose without fear of disturbing any one. It was gloriously delightful, and truly, the best of the twenty-four hours began for me after I had locked my bedroom door.

But you will ask, dear old friend, "What was Maurice doing meanwhile?" Well, dear, I confess that never worried me, and I frankly acknowledge that it should have. It ought to have occurred to me that men are differently constituted; that they take a keen pleasure in what, let us say, calls forth within us only a slight nervous irrita-

tion; that the husband who so easily resigns himself to sleeping alone may take a siesta during the day somewhere else. It really was very thoughtless of me to show such indifference.

If Maurice deceived me it was very discreetly done, without scandal and without financial extravagance. He never left me alone for dinner; never pleaded extraordinary business away from home, such as many of my friends have to put up with. In short, he was always perfect—a true gentleman. If Maurice deceived me he did it as a good husband might.

This conjugal happiness would still be lasting if our Aunt Destorbès had not decided to die suddenly in her castle of Serbat, near Moncrabeau.

You do not know Moncrabeau, the castle of Serbat, or our aunt?

Following the death of her husband fifteen years ago this old aunt died suddenly last March, after giving no sign of life to any one, except her maid, who was as old and eccentric as herself. Much to our surprise we inherited the chateau of Serbat, near Moncrabeau. This name, which really suggests nothing poetical, was, however, sufficient to electrify Maurice. I must tell you that the first five or six years of his precious existence were spent there, but he had never returned and could not without emotion recall the place where he had

played, fought and got into all sorts of mischiefs with the little *Gascons* of his age.

It was then agreed that the following summer we should spend a month in the castle which we owed to the departure of our aunt to the unknown.

Ah, what a beautiful manor, my dear old friend! I know now how beautiful; I am living in it and would much rather be somewhere else. The country is delightful. The castle is charming, with its three low, square towers surmounted by a pyramidal roof of red tiles, and round it, like a blue belt, is a dense oak grove. Oh, dear, the inside! the rooms! Our aunt must not have been at all acquainted with modern comfort. Should the drawing-room wall-paper be mouldy, should the dining-room ceiling fall over our heads, that would not matter! But would you believe it, there was one, and only one, habitable bedroom, that being the room of the dead woman (not very cheerful, is it?)—and when I say *habitable* I mean it contained a bed, standing on four legs, and a wash-stand.

Dressing-rooms were unknown to the castle. One of the rooms I noticed was furnished with only a chair and a candlestick.

The castle was so utterly devoid of any kind of furniture that after our first tour through our newly acquired property Maurice and I were

seized with a fit of uncontrollable laughter. It was about ten o'clock. The day had been spent travelling and we were tired, and needed a place to rest.

"Where will you sleep, my dear?" I said to Maurice.

"I saw a large arm-chair in the small drawing-room," he replied pitifully. "I'll have it brought up."

It was then I gave way to a feeling of pity, which I have ever since regretted.

"Mon Dieu!" I said, smiling, "if you are willing to share my bed."

To-morrow, I thought, another bed will be put up in another room.

The night passed without incident. We were too tired to think of anything but sleep.

Next day, thanks to my care, Maurice's room was ready, but when the time came to retire he noticed he had no pillows. It seems it is not customary in this part of the country to possess such luxuries.

"*Ma foi!* my dear, I shall again ask for your hospitality to-night." I was willing, but being more rested than the day before, I fell asleep only toward morning. This long body beside me disturbed me, made me restless, and I would awaken suddenly after a few moments of fitful slumber.

Fortunately, I thought while dressing the next morning, it will be the *last* time. There has been no *last* time since this unfortunate move. Maurice enjoys sleeping in my bed. He positively refuses to leave it. When I say "sleeping" it is not figuratively speaking. He occupies my bed *to sleep*—he says so, the wretch.

" 'Tis extraordinary how well I sleep beside you, my dear! We will have to take this habit back with us to Paris, for there my sleep is more or less disturbed."

As for me, I undergo a thousand tortures. No more hours of delightful idleness at night before going to bed, no more correspondence. Not that Maurice forbids it, but I like to be alone to do such things, and two eyes, even though they be looking on indifferently, disturb me.

Furthermore, I am obliged partly to restrain myself. I say partly, because I indulge in antics like a frog in a frying-pan on my own side of the bed, at times kicking Maurice viciously to get more room. This has little effect upon him. He scarcely moves, murmurs a sleepy "pardon me" and sleeps on. I have told him: "My dear, I want my bed to myself. I cannot sleep with any one."

"Bah!" said he laughingly, "you would not sleep any better if you were alone. The bed is wide and I never stir." I told him he snored (that

is a story). "Oh, no!" he replied with a conceited laugh. "If I snored I would have been told so before."

What am I to do, my trustworthy and resourceful friend? You cannot imagine how impatient this offensive return of Maurice makes me—take this word offensive in its mildest meaning. My virtue, happily, is still irreproachable, and no later than yesterday I nipped in the bud his attempt at love-making.

You see I am getting very cross and irritable. I am sure to do something I'll be sorry for. Do advise me. Find the means by which I'll regain my freedom. I surely cannot ask for a divorce simply because my husband insists upon sharing my couch.

II

Madame Anquetin to Madame Duclozac

From Paris:

It is very nice of you, little one, to think of your old friend in your hour of need, and to run breathlessly to shelter your anxiety under the wings of my experience! Oh, a great, very great experience! To think that I have seen you making mud pies when I was already *hors de cause*, giving advice to young women, now almost old. Life flies by like a cloud over the sea. Take care, to-morrow

the time will be gone and with it beauty, when no one, not even your husband, to whom at present you begrudge a share of your bed, will want to lie in it. The indifference to love you show so clearly in your letter makes me deeply sorry.

What! Only twenty-five and you say all you find in love is only a few seconds of nervous irritation? You are very frigid, my child, or else M. Duclozac is very awkward. Take your spite out on him, but do not slander love, of which you know nothing. *Que diable!*

My amorous reminiscences are very, very old; still I know my temperament was different from yours.

I understood pretty well the feelings that surprise you and I had no false modesty in showing them. To say that M. Anquetin never complained of them would be to do him an honor his memory does not deserve. He had married me for my money, which he squandered in gambling. I should have been foolish to disdain compensations. I am therefore pretty well informed on the fundamental question of conjugal love.

Now listen, and take heed, my child!

First of all, I agree with you. There is no use whatever in being two in a bed just to sleep. It would be more unreasonable to have one plate only for two to eat from and one chair only for two to

sit at table. Therefore, your husband is wrong in inflicting upon you his sleeping personality. You must drive him away.

Where is the wife, unfortunately married, who has not had, at least once in her lifetime, to undertake such a campaign? You are not the only one. All useless husbands have at times the monomania to encumber their wife's bed. Even I had to struggle for six months to reconquer mine from a husband who, like yours, got into his head the desire to occupy it platonically.

I tried different means successively. The first was to make my presence obnoxious to him. I would get up twenty times during the night, noisily light the lamp, knock against the furniture, make noise enough to awaken a dormouse in the dead of winter. At first the results were successful. Although my husband did not leave the bed, he slept very badly. True, I slept still worse. Then happened what I should have foreseen. Fatigue brought failure. My husband, however, slept in spite of the noise and I lost all inclination to move for need of sleep.

Then I tried perfumes. He loathed them. I literally soaked the sheets with all sorts of unpleasant odors, such as musk, *peau d'Espagne*, etc. My husband lost his temper, swore and fell asleep. I had to give up such a manner of dispensing hos-

pitality, for I gained nothing but frightful headaches.

Less fortunate than yourself, I had no old friend to whom I could turn for advice, but I had a few young ones of my own age.

One day when I was complaining one of them exclaimed:

"I wish I were in your place."

"Why, *mon Dieu!*"

"Because my husband does not share my bed very often."

"For what reason?"

"*Il trouvait cela trop fatigant,*" she replied, dropping her eyes blushing.

My friend was a woman whom I should never have suspected of possessing such a temperament. Her disclosure suggested something to me. I put it into practice. My whole conjugal tactics were changed. I suppressed all the unpleasantness I had introduced. I became charming, lovable, desirable. True, my husband was not very passionate, but he was a man for all that. The unexpectedness of my return flattered his vanity. He gathered his courage, which lasted four nights. The fifth night he pleaded a headache, the very same headaches we make use of on occasions, kissed me on the forehead and said: "My dear, if you'll allow me I'll leave you alone to-night." As long

as he lived, since that time, I enjoyed full possession of my sleeping quarters. That is the way I did it, *belle chérie*—try it and see for yourself. It is distasteful? Well, courage is needed.

However, a woman of imagination need only shut her eyes. The illusion is not to be despised. If, after all, your heart is so devoid of everything that even illusion has no place in it, why, mentally recite, like another friend of mine, the long list of the kings of France from Pharamond to Louis-Philippe with their dates.

Adieu! Let me know the results.

III

Madame Duclozac to Madame Anquetin.

Château of Serbat:

What have you done, dear friend, and what have you advised me to do! Yours was a nice recipe, indeed! I followed your directions conscientiously. It is now the eighth day of the new régime and Monsieur Duclozac is more attached than ever to my bed. You surely did not expect such results, did you? Are you sorry? You needn't be. I bear you no grudge. You are a dear, and I am madly in love with you and your advice. Do you understand? No? I am rather excited just now, and oh, so happy in my excitement.

Well, as soon as your letter came I became filled with admiration for the ingenuity of the method. It was, if I may say so, treating the disease by homeopathy, for my bed, the cause of the trouble, was going to furnish me the remedy. My own husband was to be banished, beating a retreat, covered with ridicule in the bargain!

I decided to open fire that very evening. To say that I was looking forward to the campaign with pleasure would be to exaggerate my feelings, but there is always a certain satisfaction to one's pride in following a treatment however severe. Then the thought of the grave matters at stake upheld me, —freedom at night, the peaceful possession of my own room and a bed all to myself.

I carefully prepared the campaign and made ready to charm my own husband. I still possess from my wedding trousseau a certain nocturnal paraphernalia which is quite suggestive, although it was worn under legitimate auspices. I was thus clothed (like Esther appearing before King Ahasuerus) when Monsieur Duclozac found me at bedtime. Nanon, the cook, and I had seen carefully to the menu for dinner and he felt happy.

I did not have to wait long for developments. Like a good general I feigned a retreat,—the enemy advanced; the battle began.

After several skirmishes both parties were left

on the battlefield. It was difficult to say who was conquered or conqueror.

The following day did not pass as smoothly as usual. I had resumed toward my husband an air of disagreeable coldness, which is generally affected between man and wife, while I read in his eyes a blending of satisfaction and irony that I could hardly endure. It enraged me so I wished to beat him. You just wait, I thought, we'll see shortly whether you have cause to be so triumphant. My mind was made up. It is said that a thing once done is easier to do a second time. I was certain now to be able to overcome my repugnance and come through triumphant next time. To tell you the whole truth it was easier to do the first time than I had ever thought.

Nevertheless, to ease my mind I schooled myself. To-night, I thought, will probably be as last night, and it will be very unpleasant. I will divert myself by mentally reciting the list of the French kings with their dates, as my good friend Anquetin advised. My self-respect being thus quieted, I waited for night to come.

When we were alone M. Duclozac showed me at once he had not forgotten what had happened the night before. The kings of France? What of them? Well, the kings of France—I did not get a chance to go further than Mérovée.

No matter, I thought, as I rested in Maurice's arms (which is part of the program, *n'est-ce pas?*), no matter. Did not my good friend say it took her a whole week to get rid of her husband? A few more sorties and then I am saved—saved!

A few more battles?

There were many more.

Your husband, dear friend, must not have felt about it as mine does. What of the French kings? Ahem! They went lamely on as best they might. Good will was not lacking to be sure, but memory sometimes played false. One king was always sure to escape. Now a Mérovingian, now a Valois, now a Bourbon, according to early or late failure of my memory. Once I had thought I had almost succeeded in reaching Napoléon—then toward morning, when I thought I would surely reach the end I missed Louis-Philippe.

The constant call upon my memory brought great fatigue. By the middle of the week I hardly knew myself. Victory? A fine victory, indeed! I was losing all control over myself. Not only my husband was not driven away, but I no longer knew whether I wanted him to go or not. Why was I so changed? I was almost willing to acknowledge defeat. I was no longer the same indifferent little woman who had truthfully said that love amounted to nothing but a few seconds

of nervous irritation. What had come over me? Here I was after three years of married life taking a new wedding trip, and although it did not extend farther than my own room, it certainly was in a great many respects much more interesting.

Justice must be done to Monsieur Duclozac, as he behaved throughout like a perfect gentleman. He did not gloat over his triumph, nor did he try to humiliate me in any way.

When we dared talk about what was changing our attitudes toward each other he showed himself loving and tender, avowing himself my most devoted lover.

"I was far from suspecting I possessed such a treasure," said he. "See how good this change has been for you. It has revealed you to me, and perhaps to yourself."

I asked him what he meant by "perhaps."

"*Mon Dieu*, my dear, for the last three years I have been a most indifferent husband. I know I can trust you, and my honor is perfectly safe in your hands—but no one is master of one's thoughts, and I made no attempt to keep yours." "Especially," he said, laughing, "when my dear wife possesses a temperament I was far from suspecting."

"Alas," I stammered, "neither did I."

"So far it proves nothing. You have shown

more enjoyment than experience. Now, will you explain why the other night when I was trying my very best to make you think of me—you called 'Louis' three times—languidly but distinctly? My name has been Maurice ever since I was born."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before I was seized with uncontrollable laughter. I threw myself on the sofa, and between what you might almost call convulsions I said, "Why, dear, it was—it was Louis—it was Louis XIV." (He verily believed for a moment I had lost my mind and it was only a long time afterward that he really understood.)

There, now, *belle amie*, I kiss your hands. I am very grateful to you for having taught me so clever a method of driving away my husband. Bear me no grudge and do not say, "The little minx." You know better than any one that the heart of a woman is even to herself a mystery.

A NOVEL OF PASSION (*Un Roman passionnel*)

Château des Roches, in Touraine, toward the end of the holidays, in the room of Mademoiselle Julie de Lescourtois. Julie is sixteen, graceful and slender, and has large innocent eyes. She is ready for bed, and looks very pretty with her blond hair braided like a little girl. Instead of going to bed like a good child, in a small Louis XVI bed of white lacquer with blue mouldings, whose pure white sheets are open in a triangle, she has put on a delicious mauve peignoir over her nightgown. She comes near the door which communicates with the next room, opens it and says:

"Are you coming, Jeanne?"

"Yes, darling."

And the next instant there is another girl in a mauve dressing gown of the same age and the same crape in Julie's room. The delicate figure of Mademoiselle Jeanne Aimery appears, a plump little blonde, the companion and inseparable friend of Julie, both at the boarding school of Avenue Hoche, and during vacation.

With mysterious ways and great seriousness

both go to the writing-table, which is in the middle of the room. Mademoiselle Julie opens a large book of manuscript which is covered with white paper. On the first page one can read these words:

DESABUSEE

A Great Novel of Passion

by

Enguerrand De Casteljaloux

Mademoiselle de Lescourtois turns over the pages of the manuscript. Her friend, Jeanne, gazes at her with admiration. This faithful friend is the only one who knows the great secret. Enguerrand de Casteljaloux has blonde hair down her back, a budding breast, and wears a mauve dressing gown. The author of "Désabusée" is no other than Julie herself, and this great passionate tale, already unfolded to page one hundred and three, is the mysterious fruit of the vacation. Under the pretext of writing letters or studying lessons, Julie shuts herself in her room in tête-à-tête with the precious manuscript, and in the evening, when everybody in the castle has retired and all the doors are safely shut, she reads to Jeanne Aimery the pages composed during the day.

Jeanne asks:

"Have you written the great scene?"

"Yes," answers Julie.

"Up to the moment when——?"

"Yes, listen."

The two friends sit down.

Julie coughs lightly and reads.

Captain Maxime did not deceive himself. The impression he had produced on Marguerite—

JEANNE (*interrupting*). Made.

JULIE. What? made? (*Understanding*) Ah, you're right. (She corrects)—he had made on Marguerite de Viran was awful. It had been enough for her to see him once.

JEANNE (*interrupting again*). To see him once?

JULIE (*vexed*). Well, you know: don't interrupt me like that all the time or I will not read. It is tiresome, after all, this pose for grammatical knowledge.

JEANNE (*timidly*). But you can't leave such mistakes.

JULIE. Such mistakes! To begin with, those are not mistakes. They are corrected by the editors. Besides, there are some in every book—there are some (she thinks) in Boileau, in Mademoiselle Zénaïde Fleuriot—everywhere.

JEANNE. It is true, after all. Go on.

JULIE (*reading*). For her to see him once was to love him. She went back to her mother's mansion in a state impossible to describe. How hand-

some he is! she thought. How beautifully his uniform shows his figure! What pretty hands he has! What a superb mustache, and so proudly turned up! Courage can be read in burning letters on his patibulary countenance.

JEANNE. What does that word patibulary mean?

JULIE. Why, don't you know? It is said about people who look awful—brigands.

JEANNE (*convinced*). Ah!

JULIE (*reading*). Disturbed by these thoughts, she threw herself at the feet of her crucifix, and asked the Lord to help her marry the captain. Otherwise, she felt herself capable of the greatest folly, such as to run away. (*To Jeanne*) It is good, don't you think so?

JEANNE. It is terrible! It will be a novel impossible to leave in everybody's hands.

JULIE (*proudly*). Oh, no indeed! (*Reading*) Night had come; the whole valley of the Loiret was covered by its sombre veil. No star shone in the firmament. The snow had spread its cold shroud over the horizon. Marguerite left her room. The wind was raging through the halls of the château.

JEANNE (*a little pale*). I am afraid, Julie. Why do you write things like that? (*She brings her chair nearer Julie's.*)

JULIE (*continuing*). Was raging through the halls of the château. Why did Marguerite feel herself forced to leave her room and go out on the terrace in such an icy gale? A mysterious force drew her there. However, what was Captain Maxime doing?

JEANNE (*her voice changed by emotion*). He is there!

JULIE. Where? There!

JEANNE. In the park of the castle! I am sure of it. Go on quickly. Heavens, how beautiful it is!

JULIE (*reading*). The captain, who also had been impelled by a mysterious force toward this young girl on whom he had made (*she hesitates a moment*) such an impression, about eleven o'clock at night had his horse, Artaban, saddled, and left at great speed for the castle. He found the door of the castle locked. (*Julie stops to enjoy the effect.*)

JEANNE. What is he going to do?

JULIE (*taking up her reading*). Maxime came down from his horse and knocked with the butt end of his revolver on the keeper's door. The latter opened, frightened. "Listen," said the captain. "If you say a word I will blow your brains out with this revolver. If you let me go in, here are one hundred thousand francs in bills."

JEANNE. You ought to say three hundred thousand, Julie.

JULIE. Why?

JEANNE. A hundred thousand makes only three thousand income—and the keeper is going to lose his position.

JULIE (*correcting*). "Here are three hundred thousand francs in bills!" The keeper accepted and the captain remounted his horse and entered the park. The light which was shining in the windows of Marguerite's room— (*To Jeanne*) now I warn you, it will be strong! Listen carefully. It is like George Sand, but more realistic——

JEANNE. Well, go on.

JULIE (*reading*). Suddenly Marguerite, who was leaning on the balustrade of the terrace which overhangs the Loiret, heard a horse swimming in the river.

JEANNE. You know the Loiret is not a river, but it doesn't matter, go on.

JULIE (*reading*). "She," cried Maxime. She had recognized and divined him through the shadows of the night. The next moment he was in her arms.

JEANNE (*timidly*). And the horse?

JULIE. Wait. The captain had put his horse alongside the balustrade, which overhangs the

Loiret. Standing in his stirrups, he just about reached the balustrade, and could exchange with Marguerite passionate caresses. (*Jeanne is holding her breath with interest, and Julie continues.*) She put her beautiful white, fresh arms around him, and her long hair covered him. Her large blue eyes sent forth a burning languor and that ardor which can triumph over all efforts of will, and all scruples of conscience. The captain steeped his lips in the same cup.

JEANNE (*disturbed*). Did you do that?

JULIE (*embarrassed*). *Mais, oui*—Why?

JEANNE. Because—I don't know. It seems to me that I have read something like that. Oh, I've got it! In the red book which you swiped from the library last vacation.

JULIE. Well, I will tell you. I copied parts of a phrase from that book, "Indiana," where Raymond kisses the girl. Only I have changed it a little. There it is, "her beautiful cool, brown arms and her great black eyes—" then the circumstances are not the same. In "Indiana" they are both in Madame Delmare's room. In my novel, one is on a horse, the other is on the terrace. It is a new situation.

JEANNE (*convinced*). It is true. Is the scene finished?

JULIE. No, indeed. The end is more exciting.

I'll write it to-morrow—this last scene is not finished.

JEANNE. Read quickly what you have.

JULIE (*reading*). The trees of the park were still blowing wildly, and the waters of the Loiret, which was flowing at the foot of the terrace, shivered. Suddenly two strokes were heard from the neighboring steeple—"Two o'clock," cried Marguerite. "I must go back to my little room."

"Farewell, my beloved," replied the captain, "I never will forget the delicious hours I have spent with you. Farewell, or rather, au revoir," and stretching himself in his stirrups, he passionately kissed her lips.

JEANNE (*scandalized*). Oh——

JULIE (*smiling*). *C'est raide, n'est ce pas?*

JEANNE. Are they going to marry?

JULIE. No, she would like to, but it is the captain who is not willing to marry her, because he is in love with an American girl.

JEANNE (*thoughtfully*). How great it is to be a man.

(*After some time of reflection Julie shuts the copy book which contains the manuscript and puts it in a drawer under lock and key. Slowly Jeanne goes back to her room.*)

JULIE. Are you going to bed?

JEANNE. Do you know, you have a great deal of talent?

JULIE. Truly, you believe that? Do you believe it is as good as George Sand?

JEANNE (*thinking for a moment to form a judicious judgment*). I think it is much more improper, but on the whole, it's better done.

JULIE (*impassionately*). I would like so much to have it printed, published in a magazine. Would you like that?

JEANNE. No, but I should like to be loved by a man like the captain. (*The two young girls are thoughtful a few moments.*)

JULIE. Good-night, I am going to bed.

JEANNE. I am going to say my prayers.

JULIE. I have said mine. (*They kiss each other, Jeanne shuts the door behind her. Julie goes to bed.*)

THE GUEST
(*L'Invité*)
I

*To Monsieur l'Abbé Binet
Rue d'Assas, 8, Paris:*

MY DEAR ABBE—

This little note is written hastily and confidentially. I am, indeed, very happy, and my heart cannot wait for the time of our return to Paris to tell you the good news.

I believe everything is now well, or will soon be so, and before the end of the winter my little girl, Lucie, will be married most satisfactorily, thanks to you.

I am deeply grateful to you, dear Abbé, for coming to my help. I am so inexperienced and live such a solitary life.

A widow whose children are getting on in years soon realizes that a firmer and more worldly-wise authority than hers is needed to guide their first steps into the world. I am not half so worried about Maurice's future as I am about his sister's.

I was greatly in doubt as to the success of an experiment which I dreaded; but now that our

plans have been successful I owe you an apology for doubting your wisdom. I needed all the regard I have for your opinion in order to consent to receive the young man into our family.

Really, I never would have admitted into our intimacy during our stay in the country a young man like Monsieur de Montivry, of whom we know so little, if you had not urged it upon us. I feared his stay would be wrongly interpreted by our neighbors. Slander is not entirely excluded amongst country folks. Alas!

I said to myself, "This handsome young man of twenty-two will not be taken easily for a friend of a child like Maurice, although old for his age."

You gave me confidence. You said, "I'll take the responsibility." And you were right. The fact that he came with you to Beaucourt prevented gossip. To see him at my table, walking with my two children and Miss Jacobson, was looked upon as perfectly natural. Every one admired his dignified behavior. He stayed here a week and had everybody devoted to him before he left. He seemed to enjoy equally fencing and horseback riding with Maurice, playing Liszt with Lucie, and talking science with Miss Jacobson. His courtesy to me brought back the ways of my lost husband.

When I think he is wealthy, has neither father nor mother, and has been brought up under your

very eyes, why, my dear Abbé Binet, I think I am the happiest mother in the world and have the wisest counsellor.

My one anxiety, after finding out the good qualities of this young man, was whether he would fall in love with Lucie, and Lucie with him. She is really charming, even though her mother says it—but so naïve! so unsophisticated! so incapable of any coquetry with any young man! The dear child would certainly not throw herself at his head. However, between you and me, I believe her natural grace has made a profound impression on Monsieur de Montivry. Not that he said anything to her about his feelings—he is too well bred for that—but he must have told Miss Jacobson how he felt. Evidently her forty years of age gave him confidence. She said to me a little while ago, “Did you notice how anxious and nervous Monsieur de Montivry was the day of his departure? The life at Beaucourt had none of the pleasures Paris affords to a rich and aristocratic young man like him. He must have left part of his heart behind.”

Miss Jacobson was reasoning correctly. She has very good common sense.

Lucie, however, said nothing to any one, and in her place I should have done the same. Every young girl loves to surround her first love affair

with mystery. I watched her and found she was very gracious, without coquetry, to our guest, enjoyed being with him and appeared somewhat at a loss after his departure.

Really, things look hopeful and our wishes may yet be fulfilled. Paris, I hope, will end what Beaucourt has started. It is agreed that we will see much of each other during the winter. I intend to ask Monsieur de Montivry to dinner for the second day after our return to Paris, and in this way I hope the two young people will grow very fond of each other and will finally marry for love, instead of making—as I feared at first—a marriage of convenience.

Now, dear Abbé, you will grant that we are acting like true Machiavelists. However, it is for the good of children we both love and the building of a Christian family. I am happier than words can tell and very grateful to you.

COMTESSE DE BEAUCOURT-GIVRY.

II

*To Mademoiselle Clothilde de Lespron
General Delivery,
Boulevard Haussman, Paris:*

I am sending you this letter, Clo darling, secretly, so that mamma, Miss Jacobson, l'Abbé Binet, and others who are doing their best to play

the part of Providence in taking care of my seventeen years shall not have the chance to poke their virtuous noses into our private affairs. What a lot of gossip I have to tell you, my Clo!

Now, listen. First of all, oh joy, we are going to leave Beaucourt next Saturday. We are coming back to the *Rue de l'Université*. I shall be there about five in the afternoon, and hope you will find time to come, you and your brother Henri, if he cares to see me and wants to know the latest about *my marriage*. Doubt is no longer possible. They expect me to marry *our guest*. The beloved pupil of l'Abbé Binet is destined to share my *couche* as they say *à la Comédie Française*. Mamma and Miss Jacobson hold long and mysterious conversations since he went away. I am being petted, caressed, kissed, as though the hour of separation had already come. Monsieur de Montivry went back to Paris and his beloved Abbé. Was he in love with me? Truly I cannot say.

The pupil of the Abbé showed great reserve and discretion during his stay. He is not stupid. His movements are graceful, and he is neither uglier nor handsomer than any other man, but you know, dear Clo, the only man's face I like to look upon is your brother Henri's—you may tell him so—there is no need for him to be jealous. If *my intended husband* behaved with perfect proprieties it was

not mamma's fault nor Miss Jacobson's, for they both took every opportunity to throw us together, relieving us of their presence whenever they could. They, no doubt, thought that so many *tête-à-têtes* would be too much for him; that a Don Juan would be revealed who would be so enterprising that it would be absolutely necessary for us to get married immediately.

Not much! As soon as we were alone our guest would imperceptibly move his chair farther away from mine and go on talking about music, bicycling, automobiling, society, just as though the Abbé and mamma were there looking on.

Really, Clo, I could not help feeling vexed. I said to myself: "Well, the Abbé must bring up his young men on a special model." Young men usually cannot be ten minutes in my company without saying very *risqué* things. Then (do not tell Henri) I was a coquette, a very little. I brought into play the many little things used in flirtations, such as glances, sudden contact of hands over the piano keys, etc. It was not quite without effect, and once or twice I believed he was about to make up his mind to kiss my hair or my wrist; but no indeed! He refrained. It may be the way a man acts toward a young girl whom he intends to marry. Do tell your brother Henri that henceforth I expect him to behave as properly with me as Monsieur

de Montivry does, or else I will never marry him. I'll marry Monsieur de Montivry. (Have no fear, I'd just as soon marry the Abbé Binet himself.)

Let it be said, however, to Monsieur de Montivry's praise that he appeared not quite himself when he went away yesterday evening. At the station he seemed quite excited. He called mamma *Monsieur l'Abbé* and Miss Jacobson *Daisy*. He kissed my hand.

I'll certainly lead him a merry dance this winter. I have no intention to settle him right away, for I have noticed since this marriage of mine is on foot everybody is much nicer to me. I am allowed to do anything I please. Jacobson herself is a perfect dear. She has given me no work to do and vows and declares I am doing beautifully.

'Tis but a short time before I am to see you again, little Clo. I send you two kisses: one you will keep for yourself and with the other you may do what you please. I shall ask Henri for it when I see him again.

I can hardly wait for our return to Paris. I *do* so want to see you and gossip with you. Gossiping is the nicest thing in the world.

LUCIE DE BEAUCOURT.

P. S.—Should Henri deceive me with *cocottes* I'll not marry him. Tell him I mean what I say. I'll certainly find out.

L.

III.

To Monsieur de Montivry

23 Rue de la Boétie, Paris:

Day after to-morrow we are going back to Paris, *my magnificent darling*, with *little goose* and her mother.

I hope to see you that very day at about five in the afternoon at your own room. Oh, you will love me as much as you did at Beaucourt, will you not? I am forever thinking of your French naughtiness, and I blush.

Good-by, dear old chap. Plenty of kisses.

DAISY JACOBSON.

THE CONNECTING LINK (*Le Trait d'Union*)

Comtesse Clotilde d'Arminges
To Mademoiselle Zabel Sivry, of the Bouffes-
Parisiens:

Sunday.

MADAMOISELLE—

As there is a good reason for our knowing each other by sight and by name, I hope this letter will not cause you too great astonishment.

I'll grant we did not ever seem destined to correspond. I beg you will excuse me, for Comte Maxime, my husband—and your friend—is responsible for it.

For the last two days and as many nights my husband has not been home. He is certainly at liberty to amuse himself as he pleases and where he chooses. I am the last one to find fault. However, such a prolonged absence is causing me some anxiety. The Comte is a gentleman, and if he has not sent me a reassuring word it is because it was impossible for him to do so.

You probably know that Monsieur d'Arminges is subject to spells which deprive him for hours of the power of motion, and even at times of any

semblance of life. These periods of coma necessitate careful attention and special treatment. Has my husband been overtaken by one of these spells while away from home? I fear so.

He left me last Friday at the usual time to go to his club. He was not seen at the club on Friday nor since then. It is now Sunday night and he is still absent. I even took the liberty to send a trustworthy maid to inquire about him from your *concierge*, mademoiselle. He told her that Monsieur d'Arminges had not been at your house for two days. However, before getting the police to make some inquiries—I dislike such a thing very much—I wished to ask you personally if you know the whereabouts of the Comte.

I hope you will appreciate the circumstances which prompt my writing to you and that you will, if you know, tell me where Comte Maxime is, or at least if he is safe and in good health.

Believe me, mademoiselle, Yours truly,

COMTESSE D'ARMINGES.

Mademoiselle Zabel Sivry

To Madame la Comtesse d'Arminges:

MADAME—

If you saw Comte Maxime Friday night you are luckier than I am, for I have not heard from him since Thursday afternoon. We made certain

purchases that day at Fontana's, amongst which was a diamond butterfly, which he intended to give you. He asked my advice about selecting it, and I did my best. This is my last news from him.

I, too, am anxious, not being accustomed to such a long absence, and fearing, as you do, for the Comte the accident you mentioned.

Of course, I should never have presumed to inquire first, although I acknowledge having also sent as discreetly as possible for information at your house.

May I hope, madame, that if you hear anything about Monsieur d'Arminges—it being impossible for him to let me know personally—you will kindly reassure me? I shall do the same without delay should I be the first one to hear anything about the subject of our mutual anxiety.

Most respectfully yours,

ZABEL S.

Comtesse d'Arminges

To Mademoiselle Sivry:

It is agreed, mademoiselle, whoever hears anything first will tell the other. So far I have heard nothing.

P. S.—Thank you for the help you gave the Comte in selecting the butterfly at Fontana's. It is beautiful and in perfect taste.

Mademoiselle Sivry

To Madame d'Arminges:

Monday.

MADAME—

Have no more anxiety. The Comte is found. While we were anxious about his health he was simple deceiving *us*. Providence punished him.

Here is the story in a few words:

Friday night as he left you he did not go to his club. He went to his friend's, Monsieur Jules Clair, a broker. Together they went to Bellevue, near Paris.

At Bellevue there stands upon the edge of the woods a villa. In this villa lives a Spanish lady and her two daughters. The three of them always extend a kind welcome to all the Parisians, especially to those who, like Monsieur d'Arminges, are rich and well born. I know not what amusement had been promised to the two friends, when the Comte was suddenly taken ill, as you feared. The mistress of the house became frightened. A doctor was sent for. His verdict was that nothing could be done. They must watch and wait.

Jules Clair dares not write to you. He remains faithfully near his friend, hoping he will soon recover consciousness. However, the days pass by. There is no change in Comte Maxime's condition.

The broker fears the consequences—your anxiety, the interference of the police—and being really inspired writes to me and tells me everything.

And now, Madame la Comtesse, you know as much as I do. I am afraid your first impulse will be to go to Bellevue to see the Spanish woman.

Will you allow me respectfully to advise you? Do not go. Let me do so. You must not be seen there. It is a society with which I am unfortunately better acquainted than you are. I know what language to use. I will settle the matter quickly and discreetly.

There is another reason for your keeping away. When the Comte returns home you will be able seemingly to ignore his adventure. It will be more comfortable for both of you.

I am awaiting your wishes, and remain

Yours very respectfully,

ZABEL S.

Comtesse d'Arminges

To Mademoiselle Sivry:

(Telegram)

You are perfectly right, mademoiselle. I leave everything to you. Thank you!

COMTESSE D'ARMINGES.

Comtesse d'Arminges

To Mademoiselle Sivry:

All is well! The Comte, after a few hours in his bedroom, regained consciousness, thanks to the care of his own physician. He is up now and has already taken some nourishment and is, I suspect, rather ashamed of himself. I wisely made no allusion to Bellevue nor to the Spanish ladies. It is tacitly understood that the accident took place at your house.

Now that we are both reassured, I wish to thank you, mademoiselle, for the discretion, the tact and the devotion you have shown in this affair. I knew already—everybody in Paris knows—that you are a very charming woman and a greatly admired actress, but allow me to be sympathetically surprised to meet amongst stage people, of whom we are told so many evil things, a delicacy and a courtesy I would vainly have looked for in our own class. It will be impossible for me ever to repay you for what you have done, and I willingly remain your debtor.

Do me the favor to accept the butterfly—which is symbolical, alas!—the Comte gave me last week. You helped him to select it; therefore you like it, and I hope you will not refuse to accept a jewel I have worn,

I will take it to your house personally this afternoon at about three o'clock. Should you be there I shall be very glad to see you.

COMTESSE D'ARMINGES.

P. S.—I'll ask you at the same time for your milliner's address. Your hats are very much admired by all of us, and neither Reboux nor Virot knows who trims them for you. You will give it to me, will you not? We certainly can have the same *modiste*, as we have the same——

I almost said something improper.

AFTER THE FALL

(*Après le Péch *)

It is ten o'clock at night. A young woman of about twenty-five, Madame de Robertier, is alone in her bedroom, seated at a small desk of English mahogany. The room is lighted by a tiny lamp. A letter is before her. There is no address on the long mauve envelope.

Madame de Robertier is in n glig e very becoming to her. She is an exquisite blonde. Her complexion is unusually clear and pure, but this evening she has been crying a great deal and her eyes show traces of tears.

MADAME DE ROBERTIER (*meditating*). Had I any courage, were I really worth anything at all I should write the truth to my husband. I should tell him: I am a wretch, unworthy of you. Because your business, which interests both of us equally, keeps you away from me I have deceived you. I have a lover, and what a lover! A *cercleux*, a gambler, stupid as a log. He has handsome dark eyes, it is true, and beautiful hands. He also has a great name, Marquis de Hermoso. That should not matter, should it? It should not be a sufficient

reason to betray you after three years of happy married life—you whom I love and who loves me. Because I love you, alas! Jean, yes, I love you, especially now, much more than the Marquis, who held me in his arms from five to seven at his house, *Rue de la Baume*.

(Flood of reminiscences. Madame de Robertier's thoughts drift a moment. She recovers herself.)

This is what I should write to Monsieur de Robertier if I had any heart. That would be loyal, honest (*after a time*) and absurd, because after all it would be much worse for his peace of mind to know everything. To-day from five to seven Monsieur de Robertier has been as quiet and happy as usual. In all reason no one can expect me to make my husband unhappy through an excess of loyalty. I will write to Jean in a minute a good, long letter full of tender and passionate things (he *loves* to receive such letters when he is away from me). And the same mail will bring to Hermoso this little note written immediately after leaving him.

My husband will have his letter the day after to-morrow. Monsieur de Hermoso will receive his to-morrow morning. What a lovely surprise for his awakening!

I must read it again.

(Tears the envelope, opens the letter and reads.)

"MONSIEUR:

"You have cruelly abused the confidence which an honest woman placed in you. I thought I was going to your house simply to look at your bibelots. After what passed you understand I cannot see you again. I am glad to be able to tell you that I love my husband and feel for you the deepest disgust.

"JACQUELINE."

(She thinks a moment, still holding the note.)

But—it is very imprudent, after all, to write such things to this man. Suppose he should show this letter at his club. It means clearly, "I have been your mistress," and then (*with an imperceptible smile*) the sentence about the bibelots is not a happy one. I was so excited. The sentence about the disgust, on the other hand, is perfect.

(She tears the letter, begins another, taking care to change her handwriting.)

"DEAR SIR:

"You have failed to keep your word. I did

what I did convinced that you would act like a gentleman. You have taken advantage of me cruelly. Henceforth you will understand that it will be impossible to see me again, for I am glad to be able to tell you that I love my husband and feel for you nothing but scorn.

“J——”

(She thinks.)

This one is not so compromising, but it is idiotic. “I did what I did”—that does not mean anything at all. Yes, it is badly written. And Hermoso has been the lover of Madame Lescoeuve, who can write so well. Decidedly, this will not do.

(She tears the note and begins another.)

“DEAR SIR:

“I beg you will erase from your memory, as I do from mine, the hours I spent with you to-day. I address myself to your honor as a gentleman. Everything, *n'est ce pas*, is over and forgotten. I adore my husband and feel for you—” *(She stops)*

Truly, writing to him in this way I cannot tell him I feel for him the greatest disgust. Two lines above I call him a gentleman. I will simply say, “I adore my husband.”

Only this letter coming the day after—he would laugh and he would have the right to do so. Truly, have I anything to reproach him with? He did what any other man would have done under the same circumstances. I accepted his invitation to come and see his bibelots. I knew perfectly well he would not act like the guardian of a museum. I do not see how it happened. It is wrong of my husband to leave me alone so long.

(She tears the letter which has just been written and writes another.)

“DEAR SIR:

“I beg you to erase *this day* from your memory, as I shall from mine, *everything*. All must be forgotten. I shall remember you with a heart full of sadness, but without scorn and without hatred.

“J——”

(Reading again.)

This one is pretty good. It is sad, calm, dignified. It will not hurt the poor man too much. I have played the coquette with him after all!

Now, shall I send the letter this evening? It is too late, I fear. Betty would look at the address and gossip with the servants. It will be better for me to mail it to-morrow on my way to the Louvre. Now, let's go to bed.

(Night toilet, prayers, and so forth. Eight hours of sound sleep. About half-past nine the next morning, Betty, the maid, enters her mistress' room.)

MADAME DE ROBERTIER (*awakening*). Well? What is it?

BETTY. A large basket of flowers from Vail-lent, madame.

MADAME DE ROBERTIER (*gathering her wits*). Oh, some flowers. Yes, I know. All right. Close the windows and bring the basket. (*Betty brings a basket of exquisite red and white roses and then goes out.*)

MADAME DE ROBERTIER. How nice of him. A lovely morning's greeting. Poor fellow! And I wrote him such a harsh letter last night!

(She goes to her desk, tears open the letter written the night before, reads it over; walks about the room for a few minutes, stops before the pier glass and sees, with a great deal of satisfaction, that sleep has brought back freshness to her face. Goes to her desk and tears the letter, saying:)

Decidedly, I cannot send this after this basket of flowers.

(Sits down and writes rapidly the following note:)

“Thank you. I am very sad. I should like to forget yesterday. I cannot. Be sorry for me!”

“J——”

(Reading.)

This will do. It is dignified and much better than the other one. I'll post it on my way to the Louvre. *(Rings for Betty.)*

A FRIEND
(*L'Amie*)

Madame Gélabert

To Lieutenant Henri de Poy:

YOU honor me, dear friend, by your confidence. Just think, not yet thirty years old—being only eighteen months older than my lovely friend Yvonne, who had the great, good fortune of attracting you—to be asked to play matchmaker as any old grandmother might. If it did not concern Yvonne, whom I love, and you, whom I do not dislike, I might have refused such an honor, but being a true friend I'll do the best I can for both of you.

You dare not, you say, speak about your feelings to the charming Yvonne because you are naturally timid and think yourself unworthy of her love. Timid you certainly are! I know no man as handicapped as you when it comes to say to a woman, "I love you." You—reputed to be such a fine officer—so bold before the enemy's fire, you are completely routed by the seemingly virtuous looks of our sex. A haughty glance frightens you. Ah! Lieutenant, what a lot of fun you have already missed! Handsome as you are (you are hand-

some, do you know it?) you could have had many a love affair in our set. We certainly cannot, in all decency, make advances to you. To come back to the subject. Yvonne, whom you formally call Madame la Baronne de Guerbois, has not been able to help you overcome your usual embarrassment! She is usually very clever. How skilfully she used to bring about the meetings in which you lost your heart to her! To think that I suspected nothing! I attributed her more frequent visits to me to the leisure her widowhood gave her, and I was glad to see you also come to my house more and more frequently. Both of you certainly made me play a singular part, but as you wish to marry her I have no grudge against you, and forgive you, especially, my dear Henri, since you ask my advice and help in the matter.

Yes, dear friend, you have made a happy choice. You know how much I love Yvonne. Time has strengthened our friendship, which was begun in the schoolroom. I have been the confidante of all her girlish dreams, her love affairs, her failings. I was her only support at the critical time in her life—she surely has told you—which has not been a haven of rest. Yvonne, with more heart, or if you prefer, more temperament, than one would suspect, was unhappily married. Her beauty, her expensive tastes required money. M. de Guerbois,

a rich old man, gave her a good and honorable name with luxuries. It intoxicated the dear Yvonne, who had been poor since infancy and whose name was Copain. By the way, never mention that name to her, for she loathes it as too plebeian. Her ancestors were all small tradespeople, very plain though honorable. However, you would not be marrying them. All you need to care for is the fact that although of bourgeois extraction, Yvonne is grace and distinction personified.

Having become Baronne de Guerbois, Yvonne, as I said above, became intoxicated with her fortune and newly acquired entrance into aristocracy. However, fortune and position are not always sufficient to a beautiful and much admired woman of twenty. The poor child did not even have any strong religious belief to support her. In short, her five years of married life did not pass without storms. She certainly did not hide the fact from you, for she is loyalty itself, and you are too sensible to resent her actions of the past. She did not know you then. You have no right to be more severe on the poor child than we have been, and it will be a great honor as well as a great happiness for you to give her the shelter of your spotless name. It will reopen the few doors which have been closed to her.

You see, dear friend, I fully approve of your

plans and will be glad to see them come to maturity. However, you are a man and would undoubtedly like to know the truth. I am not at all certain Yvonne would marry you, not that she ever told me anything to make me think she would not. I wish she had. She speaks of you serenely and openly. Knowing her as I do, I am tempted to say she does not dream of your love.

Had I for a second thought her heart was no longer in her keeping I should have suspected her of having given it to young Maurice Lautrait. Three months ago she was attracted by this *cer-cleux* and did not hesitate to show it. As she has said nothing about him for some time I have wondered, Ahem! Can she be no longer able to freely talk about him? Perhaps it only means that he has been set aside and forgotten and her whole thought is now centred upon you. I wish it with all my heart!

I am only warning you against a possible disappointment. Should you not succeed the first time—why, try again. Her caprices never last long and she is too intelligent not to realize the advantages of a marriage with a man like yourself, young, rich and well established in society. If need be, I'll use all the influence I have over her to help your cause, and once her husband, you need not receive M. Lautrait.

Shall we consider the thing now as settled? Your old friend is going to give you some advice, having only the desire to make sure of your happiness and Yvonne's. Promise me, my friend, to watch carefully over the dear child's health. Although she looks strong and well she is nevertheless very delicate, neurasthenic to a degree alarming to her physicians. This dreadful condition goes back to the first year of her married life. It is said M. de Guerbais alone knows the cause. Poor child! You will have to love her much to make her forget her unpleasant memories.

I love her in spite of the changefulness of her temper. To me she recalls all the physical and moral tribulations she has passed through.

Never cross her in anything, and if sometimes her whims surprise you, or one of those sudden changes of moods comes on, such as I am acquainted with, take her into your arms, kiss her, but do not scold. It seems to be the only method of calming her and it is infallible.

Some one she once loved told me: "The best thing in Yvonne's disposition is her temperament." My only fear, my dear friend, and my duty is to tell it before the irretrievable step has been taken, is not the fear that Yvonne will be unhappy with you—you are for her the unlooked-for husband—but I am less certain of your own happiness, and

that worries me. Why did you ask my advice? Why do you ask me to warn you against yourself? I know you well.

It seems to me that to be happy with a woman you would have to find in her more self-abnegation, more motherliness—if I may say so—than you can expect from the delightful Yvonne.

You have a brilliant future before you. I do not see clearly what benefit marriage and the care of a family could bring to your life, already so full. I should like to see by your side a less exacting woman, asking in return for her devotion only the joy and pride your friendship would afford her. Naturally all these objections fail before so great an argument as love. If you truly love, if you are not mistaking the thrill of desire for love a timid man like you feels when he is with a coquette, then I frankly say to you, *marry*. If you are—if you are—then wait. I do not believe you have to fear any serious rival.

Meditate upon this, my dear friend, and to-morrow come and tell me the results at three in the afternoon. I shall be at home for you *only*. My husband will not disturb us, as he is away on a hunting trip. You will speak to me freely, will you not? Together we will examine your heart and make sure you really know it. I am certain you need some one to help you.

Whatever may be the result of this inspection I shall have had the satisfaction of having done my very best for you, and for my dear Yvonne, whom I love almost as much as I do you.

A RIVAL (*Rivale*)

June Eighteen.

I HAD never been jealous of the women Maurice courted until Juliette, nor was I jealous of his success and good fortune in society or his conquests with actresses and among ladies of all kinds. Young women, young girls more or less emancipated, all flew to him, attracted like larks by his sparkling fame, his good looks and princely manners.

I was not jealous; I was even proud that I received some of the homage.

Of my flesh and blood I had made this handsome artist so quickly brought into fame!

To comfort me from an early widowhood I had wished no other love but his. Since I had deprived myself of so many things, sacrificed so much to bring up and educate him, his fame like his beauty was my work.

Then he was so grateful, so tender to his old mother, my cherished artist!

Even before people he would always call me "Maman." He would pretend to be so obedient to my desires, this big boy, whose independence no

master had curbed. Ah! they could pursue him in his young glory! They could give themselves to him! I knew they were only an amusement; that he would tire of them and change, just as he took a new horse to go to the Bois. The only woman in his life, the true adviser, the confidante and his refuge, was his mother.

He met Juliette among such bourgeois who like to rub up against artists. She was a young girl—really no longer young—who had flirted a great deal; that is to say, had tried and missed many matches.

She was pretty, I must admit, with red hair like English mahogany; her skin like bran, so delicate that one was afraid to mar it with a kiss; with eyes of a peculiar green, very deep and dewy—seaweed green eyes, if one can say that. She courted Maurice like all the others, and Maurice rushed to her with overflowing spirits, as he always did, because he imagined the first six weeks that he had found the *grande passion*. I had no anxiety, knowing the length of such passion.

When he painted the portrait of Juliette she made me uneasy with her seaweed eyes, watery and cold, in which I did not read the adoration, the desire of sacrifice, that Maurice inspired in women. The anxious, agitated and uneasy one was rather Maurice.

He would try to divert himself when near her by telling funny anecdotes or *bons mots*, but I knew that his heart was not happy. Three times he started the portrait of Juliette and three times he made a failure. She would harshly remind him of that.

The time of leaving for the country came. Juliette was about to leave. A fourth trial was postponed for the leisure of the country. Maurice was to spend a few weeks with her parents on their estate in Touraine, and there, more peacefully, would begin and finish the portrait.

Until he left, my beloved artist was very sad and all upset. I suffered as much as he did, because he did not confide his misery to me. For the first time he did not tell me anything. He never pronounced Juliette's name in my presence. When I would try to talk about her myself he showed me a face hard and mute—one that his old mother did not know.

He left. I was alone for one month and a half. When he came he was well again and almost joyful. He told me that he wished to marry Juliette. Well! I could not endure it. I told him what I thought of his Juliette; I had information and knew stories and stories. The stories were perhaps not absolutely authentic. There were some which seemed to be invented, but I pretended to believe everything and told him all. He listened to me

silently for a long time; then he grew pale and left me. He came back only at night. He said, kissing me, "Listen, mother, never speak to me as you did a little while ago. Such baseness as has been told you is unworthy of you. Juliette merits to be loved and she loves me. Do not force me to choose between her and you."

They were married. I was not able to bring myself to live with them, although Juliette had offered to have us live together. No! I would not! I could not. I went to live near Paris in a little house with my two servants. Maurice came to see me from time to time; and on Sunday he lunched with me. I never met my daughter-in-law unless I went to Paris myself.

I lived thus two sad years, the saddest of my life, and which have made me ten years older. Never a betrayed wife or a deceived mistress has been as jealous as I was. Not of the joys and pleasures that she gave him, nor of the caresses *à fleur de nerfs* that he had received and returned to so many women! No—but she was his companion, confidante, shelter, all that I had been; she was what I no longer was, the woman of his life.

The first year of his marriage he did not exhibit his paintings; he did nothing. Would one believe that I was pleased with that? And I said to my-

self, "She prevents him from painting." The following year, however, with his *Mort de Manon*, he triumphed, he received the *prix du Salon*, and his success hurt me! Me! who had formerly lived on his successes. It was because I had recognized the undulating body, the red curls, the seaweed eyes of Manon!

He did not forget me; he always came to see his old mother; little by little he came oftener, and it seemed to me that he remained longer. One would have said that he had something to confide that he did not dare, and that he suffered for it. He was suffering, and because I adored him I knew well whence came the reason of his pain and I did not wish that he should pour it in one avowal; it was necessary that he should drink it to the lees alone, without help, witness, so that he should come back to me bruised and quivering, to be cured, and he should owe me his life. I no longer hated Juliette now that she did him harm. At the time of their honeymoon I had not wished to know anything in their life. Now that the April moon was rising I entered into their existence; I observed and saw and understood everything at one glance. My daughter-in-law had no lover yet, but curiosity was awakened in her impure mind. I went to one of their receptions; I saw the man she wanted. He was one of those who had formerly flirted with her

and had received demi-caresses—the first one, perhaps—and now knowing what love was, she came back to him. Our first love attracts us the rest of our life, and sometimes we come back to it in spite of ourselves.

I came back to my little house in the suburbs, calmed, sure of the future. Six weeks later, when my poor beloved Maurice came to throw himself in my arms, sobbing and prostrated, but also furious and enraged against that woman who was already out of reach, I pressed him against me, thanking God, who was giving him back to me.

All my tortures were forgotten. He was back! I had overcome my rival.

TESTAMENT (*Testament*)

Madame Pierre Durieu:

To Madame Pierre Durieu:

MY DEAR CHILD—you for whom I write this sort of testament—I know you not. You are living, however, at this moment somewhere in this great Paris, outside of it perhaps, though I cannot imagine my beloved Parisian, Pierre, marrying a girl brought up outside of Paris after I am gone. You see I speak of his second marriage without any anger, without any suffering, as of an inevitable thing rather to be desired, for my dear Pierre must not live alone, and soon I shall be no more.

I shall live one more week, this much the doctor told me a little while ago.

For three years I have been suffering cruelly, and I should hail my deliverance with joy if I were not at the same time to part with my husband, for I love him so passionately that the hours of my present agonies seem short when he is by my side.

Naturally, I wish to talk to you about him. This is to be given to you a month after your mar-

riage by Monsieur Legrand, my lawyer, whom I can trust. Read this carefully, and think while reading that it was written at a time when the soul is almost freed from the body, by the woman who has loved most dearly the man you now love most.

I was twenty-six when Pierre married me. I am now thirty-four. I must give you a short story of our life together so that you may well understand what I shall tell you afterward.

We lived next door to each other; he was taking music lessons at the Conservatoire, and I was giving private lessons all day. Pierre was twenty-two, but scarcely looked eighteen; he was pale, thin, coughed, and my mother and myself were very sorry for him. We fell into the habit of doing little motherly things for him; he often came to dinner with us, and sometimes we passed the evening at his house. He played his compositions for us upon a wretched piano he had rented. Mother did not think much of his talent, while I was beginning to suspect his genius. What shall I say, my child? We fell in love with each other. Pierre proposed. I did not hide from him all the inconveniences there were in his making a poor marriage, to say nothing of my being four years older than he was. His mind was made up; nothing could change his intentions, and I loved him too much to resist him long.

This disinterested marriage brought him luck. Even before he had won the *Prix de Rome* he began to be known among artists and society people interested in art. His pupils were many. A very rich foreigner, exceedingly fond of music, presented at her house his wonderful lyric drama, *Enoch Arden*, whom many insist on calling his masterpiece.

Pierre had become famous. With it all he was mine—society had not turned his head. In Rome he lived in retirement and worked hard, and I do not believe any woman enjoyed more happiness than I did during those few years. The only sorrow, which came just before our return home, was the loss of my dear mother.

Now, child, do not misunderstand me. I do not wish to accuse Pierre, nor do I wish to make him appear in your eyes selfish and worldly. We should not demand in a man of genius the same virtues that are the least duty of an ordinary man; besides, Pierre was tied to a woman older than himself, whose health was undermined by a mysterious sickness. I suffered horribly.

Paris once more after the peaceful years spent in Italy, Paris so greedy for new names and new fame; Paris greeted him in a way that intoxicated him. He was seized by a fever of worldliness and he lost his head. His aim and ambition were now

to be one of the world and the idol of society women. He succeeded. His work suffered and our happiness was destroyed. He neglected me. He neglected his art.

True, sickness was taking from me youth and personal charms. From time to time Pierre saw how miserable I was, and would be moved by repentance, and for weeks at a time he would come back to me—I suspect mostly when some society woman had tormented or deceived him. If, however, I was no longer the joy of his eyes I was still, as he liked to call me, the keeper of his inner self. Willingly I devoted myself to the task. More than ever Pierre needed me. Our income was melting rapidly in the feverish life he was living. He worked little and the greatest economy became necessary. Too long hours were not good for his health; too high living, all irregularities, affected his heart. I made use of my own sickness to detain him at home at least two evenings a week; no doubt he must have thought me selfish and I may have lost some of his love by so doing, but I did at least, in so far as I was able, mitigate the deadly effect of his new life.

This motherly rôle I must also give up, and once dead I wonder what will become of Pierre. I shall require a promise that he marry again, for I am too much afraid of chance companions.

Whom will he choose? Who will she be? Will she love him unselfishly for himself only, as a woman should love an artist? Will she be the keeper of his inner self as well as the delight of his senses and the joy of his mind?

Dear child, let me advise you. To make him happy you will have over me the advantages of youth, health, and novelty. Without any jealousy, I wish you to be more beautiful, more fascinating than I was even when he thought I was. Make use of your power to make him happy. Without tormenting him by useless coquetries, be coquette enough with him to foster his desire for you. I never did that and therein lies my mistake. He knew I would always be there to soothe and heal his bruised heart. The less certain he will be about you the less time he will have to spend outside in intrigues that are not good for his health nor his talent. In a word, play the coquette while thinking of him and not of yourself.

Perhaps you will be rich. I hope so, for one of my greatest anxieties has always been Pierre's future; the terrible future of a poor artist who when old age comes cannot earn his living and has been unable to save. Yet Pierre might be capable of marrying a penniless woman, and I would not be the one to blame him for so doing. If you are, my poor child, you will have to exercise the strictest

economy and avoid debts. Let nothing interfere with his material comfort, and above all do not commit the crime of making him slave at work to increase your own personal comfort. Remember that any dress you buy, any jewel he gives you, will cost him some of his health and genius—both must be sacred to you. Do not tire him with love, for he is not so strong as he thinks.

It is probable that he will deceive you for other women. You would not love him much if you did not suffer, but you would love him still less if you tormented him with your jealousy. Hold him as well as you can, but sincerely forgive his weaknesses. You will be young enough to live to the blessed old age (which would have been paradise to me) when you will love each other peacefully and your hair will be gray. That time is the real honeymoon we wives of famous men do have. Let that thought comfort you in the anxieties of the present.

This is what I wanted to tell you. Death is the great master of life, and it is close to the former that one really begins to understand the latter. Make Pierre happier than I did, child, and accept the blessing of a soul purified by suffering.

RESPECT
(*Le Respect*)

Mlle. Zoé Canisy

To the Comte Louis de la Rivaudière:

WHEN this letter reaches you, my dear Louis, I shall be no longer in Paris, but on my way to Italy with Sir William Hopkins, the apoplectic Englishman whom you met twice at my house during the past week and whom I brazenly introduced to you as my uncle. Sir William is not my uncle. He is my friend. If I tell you this abruptly do not think that I am doing so with the cruel desire to hurt you. No, I love you, I still love you, believe me, only our *liaison* was condemned to come to a sudden end, having been based upon a misunderstanding. Make up your mind courageously to the inevitable and once again listen to me—this experience will be useful to you.

Do you remember, dear friend, the way we became acquainted with each other toward the middle of June? How delightfully romantic! The sudden heavy shower, the same carriage hailed by both at the same time, the coachman stopping before you, and your offering me—with the most

profound bow—this precious shelter on wheels of which you said I stood in greater need than yourself—a thousand times more. You showed yourself so perfect in manners and so very timid at the same time (for you hesitated to get in with me, child!) that I at once guessed you had been brought up by the Good Brothers and became very much infatuated.

How long it took you to awake to the fact! I had to lead you step by step until finally your innocence took a plunge at my feet. But before it came to that how many useless measures were played through, as the bandmaster would say. Five or six meals taken tête-à-tête, twenty rendez-vous at least, during which our talk would have edified a novitiate of the Carmelite Sisters. And so much formality, so many *Madame*—so many *When I had the pleasure of meeting you*—so many *Will you allow me to see you home?* (As if I objected, Silly!) All these marks of respect tried my nerves terribly. After leaving you I almost had hysterics. I would promise myself to send you about your business, never to see you again. But you see I was infatuated, and infatuation is for us women a modern form of fatality.

Finally, when your white robe was gently cast aside—by my own hand and without any help from you—we had a few days of happiness. Oh!

you played your part very awkwardly, dear, make no mistakes on that score! But I loved you much and your awkwardness only made you more fascinating. Your respect was in no way diminished. You treated me as you would have treated Lady de la Rivaudière had there been one. When it came to the horrible question of—money—I was much more embarrassed. Personally I do not despise it—you may have noticed as much. Well, we have to live, and as I was perfectly true to you all my savings had been used up. You are extremely generous and very rich. Yet because of the accursed respect which stopped the words in your throat I had to play a disgusting comedy in order to obtain the necessities of life. Yes, my dear Comte, if I invented a father—a captain of a merchantman, whose ship was so suddenly wrecked; all the cargo destroyed; anxious creditors; the necessity of selling my home and furniture to save the honor of the family—you alone are responsible. It was a monumental lie and I had more trouble than you think, believe me, to make the different pieces fit together. What was I to do?

Everything was at last satisfactorily arranged. You were very liberal, you did everything simply and willingly. I would have asked nothing better, you may be sure, than to reward you by a more

active tenderness, a little less—what shall I say?—monotonous than in the past. No, indeed! As well try to make a deaf man hear or a blind one see. Heaven knows how much perseverance and inspiration I had to bring into play. Alas! you would look away for fear temptation would prove too great for you and you might be disrespectful to me—to me, who was only wishing you would. One day, having had a little champagne, I tried—Ah! I did not go very far—I soon discovered by the painful expression of your face that I was on the wrong road and drew back in haste. Acknowledge it—you were dreadfully frightened!

I then changed my tactics. I brought the conversation skilfully upon suggestive topics. I innocently questioned you. I confided to you conversations supposedly heard by accident; I wanted explanations. How funny you were—stammering, blushing—trying to change the subject of conversation. Cornered, you would say: “Yes—assuredly there are men without principles who—bad women who—,” etc., but you, you would never love a woman without showing her the respect you would show your wife.

Finally I let you alone and our love kept its even course, seasoned with respect. My infatuation must have been immense to survive so many proprieties. It did survive till boredom came be-

tween us. I still loved you, but you bored me to extinction. The very qualities that had made me love you now exasperated me. You could scarcely open your mouth or make a movement without irritating me. I would gladly have lost my temper, been disagreeable, and been relieved thereby; but how could I quarrel with a man who always addresses one as though she were a princess, bows before her slightest wish and who says and does everything with the most aggravating perfection? Oh, my dear Comte, how very respectful and what a bore you were during those awful days!

With it all I did not deceive you. Things might have gone on much longer in the same way had not chance taken a hand in the game.

Two weeks ago I was coming home from one of our mournful *séances*, tired, my teeth on edge, wishing I could beat some one; I heard a step behind me. I turned partly around. I saw a man about forty-five walking heavily, a large black cigar in his mouth, looking every inch of him like an English sportsman. I hurried, so did he. I did not care whether he found out or not where I lived, so I reached my house without apparently having noticed anything unusual.

I was in my room, having taken off my hat and veil, when suddenly the looking-glass over the mantel reflected the face of the man who had fol-

lowed me. He was standing quietly behind me, having met no servant, or bribed them to let him pass.

I turned around angrily.

"Sir, how dare you enter a woman's house in this way? Go, before I have you thrown out."

He did not move, drew his pocketbook out and showed several banknotes.

"I'll give you money, much money. I like women like you—" and as I stretched my hand toward the bell he locked the door, seized my hands and said:

"Why not?"

What more shall I tell you, my dear Louis? Sir William Hopkins, for it was he, behaved like a brute, and now that I know him better I am not at all surprised, for he has about as much refinement as a stable boy. A woman's soul is a mystery to herself. His roughness relieved the tension of my nerves.

My new friend did not please me much, but he was just the remedy I needed to cure the indigestion of respect from which I was suffering.

Day before yesterday he suggested I accompany him to Italy, travel with him for two months. All my expenses would be paid, just like Sarah Bernhardt. I had also the privilege of taking two servants with me.

I have accepted.

In two months I shall be back in Paris, where I shall be glad to see you, if you care to come—on one condition, however, and that is that you will leave respect behind.

MY FIRST REMORSE

(*Premier Remords*)

AT times, looking back over the past, thinking of what filled my life and made it a delightful spot of lovely memories instead of the barren and mournful years it would have been—had begun to be—I would try hard to awaken my conscience, to judge myself with severity.

After all, I thought, have I not the right to be perfectly happy? True, my happiness is in a measure stolen. I am cheating society, law and duty. I have not been true—I have been deceiving my husband for fourteen years.

I would try very hard to be indignant at myself; it seemed to me I should have been less criminal had I felt any remorse. I would look at my husband, peacefully reading his newspaper as carefully as he does everything else, and I would reproach myself: Here is a good man, trusting you with his good name, his peace of mind. How have you kept your trust for the last fourteen years? If this good man, who ploddingly earns his living, yours and your daughter's, knew, do you think the joys you are so proud of could outweigh the sorrow he would feel?

Well, he does not know; he will never know. He has never laid eyes on the man for whom I deceive him. It is precisely the certainty of his security which keeps me from feeling any remorse. Since I do not really love this husband of mine, since I feel for him only affection born of habit due to our long life together, I owe him nothing more than to make his life a peaceful one and share his interest. No matter how close the meshes of law and proprieties are, a woman feels duty bound to be faithful only to the man she loves with her whole heart and soul.

Thus was I thinking yesterday, and to-day I know what remorse is. I know it so well that I do not see how I shall live. One word from my sixteen-year-old daughter, *Hélène*, brought it about.

I brought up the child to the best of my ability; if I am not a blameless wife, I am at least a good mother. Few girls, I believe, have been better cared for during their childhood. Even when I was most in love with *Lucien*, the care of my daughter's health and happiness always brought me back to reason and proprieties. For her sake I would not consent to a scandal.

As *Hélène* grew up I jealously watched over her as well as myself. I certainly made greater effort to hide the truth from those clear, childish eyes than to keep my husband from knowing it. Guilty,

soul-stained, I had the joy to bring up this young soul in complete ignorance. Fearing to trust myself further, I placed her, at the age of ten, in a convent, where her education could safely be attended to. She came to see us only once a month, she spent two weeks with us during the holidays before going to her grandmother in the country, and naturally during that time all relations between Lucien and myself were suspended. I enjoyed seeing her grow up deliciously pure, in complete ignorance of the ugly things in life. This was also a reason why I felt no remorse. However, I knew the convent could not keep her forever, and I had resolved to marry her young. Besides, I felt strong enough to be good while she remained with us at home.

Hélène should have gone back to her convent yesterday morning. In the afternoon I had a rendezvous with Lucien. Yes, such blending of motherly duties and dissipation is perfectly dreadful, but until now I had never suffered from it. I would gladly have sacrificed my meeting with Lucien for Hélène's sake. I was to have seen him to-day at three. A dispatch came in the morning from the convent, informing us that the walls of the dormitory had been painted over and that it had been decided to give them time to dry, to prolong the holidays for two days. Hélène was very

happy, and I very much embarrassed. I thought of sending Lucien a telegram, but during the whole morning my daughter did not leave my side. I would not have had the time to write, still less to carry the telegram, and therefore decided to do nothing. Lucien will wait, I thought; he will think that something prevented me from keeping my appointment.

He did wait, in fact, one hour, two hours; but, knowing my usual promptness, when five o'clock came he began to be really worried. Perhaps his not having seen me for a week made him more anxious to see me again; at any rate, he jumped into the first hansom he met and had himself driven straight to our house.

The maid, who does not know Lucien (I tell you the secret is impenetrable), came in shortly after five to announce that a gentleman was asking for me. He was very insistent and would not take no for an answer. I stepped into my husband's private room, for he was not home yet, and Hélène waited for me in the next room.

When I saw Lucien it seemed to me that everything was lost, the truth discovered, my misdeed known. I uttered a cry. Lucien tried to calm me: "I am going at once, but why did you not come this afternoon?" I know not what I answered, I was in such a hurry to see him go. He did not in-

sist on staying, being sure now that I was well. Before going back to Hélène, I stepped into my own room, where I tried to regain my self-possession.

Hélène did not mention the wine merchant and I had not the courage to speak of him first. I could not lie with her penetrating eyes upon my face. My husband came home. At dinner he was very gay, being glad to have his daughter, whom he loves dearly, one evening longer. At dessert he asked:

“Did any one come this afternoon while I was away?”

I felt myself turning pale and faint. I wanted to speak; my mouth refused to utter a syllable, and suddenly I heard my daughter's voice reply calmly:

“No, father, no one came.”

I looked at her; our eyes met. Hers were smiling and clearly saying: “Have no fear, I'll stand by you.”

I could not sleep all night. I am ashamed of myself. Yes, I am severely punished, for my child has not only guessed (long ago perhaps) her mother's shame, but has learned, by the example I set her, to deceive, to lie for me and better than I can.

THE HUSBAND OF MADEMOISELLE HEUDIER

(Le Mari de Mlle. Heudier)

I

I believe I shall not be long in this valley of sorrows. There is only one important event in the life of an old maid, a cheerful one on the whole in spite of the solitary years. Behold, this event is vanishing; it no longer is and never was. It was a mistake. Only my dog Moustache and my harmonium remain, with the care of my eternal salvation. Hum! it's little enough! If I were a young person in love I should at least have the resource of writing my secret sorrows in a prettily bound diary. But one doesn't start new habits at forty-three.

I have been in love and loved from fourteen to forty-three, until yesterday at half-past two in the afternoon. Are there many professional beauties in Paris or in London who could boast of as much, with never any disputes, never any unfaithfulness? Twenty-nine years of perfect love!

This is how our love started.

My father was a modest man who held a gov-

ernment position in the administration of revenues, one of those men who never reach a very prominent position because each time that there is a vacancy some man less timid, or with more friends to help him, hastens to obtain it. He merely vegetated all his life in Sarthe, where he had been sent the day after his marriage, and where I was born and grew up.

It was there, at Givry, that I became acquainted with "my husband." My parents and his had at once called him thus, this little Lucien who came to spend his holidays at home.

We were neighbors. He was one of five children, and his father, a good man, could with some difficulty provide for the wants of a wife and large family. Beside them my parents, who had a little income of their own and only one child, were almost rich. My spontaneous consent to a marriage with Lucien was certainly free from pecuniary thoughts; moreover, we were both fourteen, he two months older than I. At that age money does not stand in the way.

Lucien and I were nice little lovers. He was extremely timid, very kindly disposed, although somewhat taciturn; I managed him altogether. I had convinced him that he was my husband; he accepted the fact. To be my husband between fourteen and eighteen meant for him to be tied to my petticoat

strings, like a younger brother, during holiday time, in August and September.

Once in a while we kissed each other; it gave us about as much thrill as the slaps which we might happen to exchange.

I am beginning to believe, after forty-three years of peace, that I have a rather cold temperament; as to Lucien, up to the time he left me he was nothing but a little girl, and perhaps I was not the most innocent. Separation came when we were eighteen. Thanks to the good offices of a deputy, the Leterres had found for Lucien an unexpected position.

A rich Englishman who had spent his life in business all over the globe wished to have as a companion a young Frenchman, so that he could travel now for his pleasure. He wanted a young Frenchman for a companion, believing that the conversation of French people is witty, diverting, and pleasant. Lucien, in spite of the real feelings he showed when he left me, was naturally intoxicated at the thought of travelling all over the world.

Future plans were not forgotten. "As soon as the old soap merchant (it was the Englishman Robinson's Soap) has given me enough guineas I shall come back and marry you." We did not realize how long it would take before we had enough guineas, but evidently thought it would be

a short time to wait for our marriage, perhaps only a few months.

That happened twenty-five years ago. Twenty-five years! Long enough for a woman usually to raise a family, and often to see another generation succeed her children.

As for me, I have waited for marriage, children, life, for twenty-five years. I know well that no one would believe me, or that I would pass for a lunatic if I made this confidence to any one else but myself. However, it is true.

For twenty-five years my only reason for living, or finding life sometimes agreeable, was that I loved some one and that some one loved me.

My father died, then my mother. The small fortune I possessed was greatly reduced through the bad management of my lawyer, but I lived on hopeful and with confidence in the future.

Without seeing Lucien once in twenty-five years?

Yes; without seeing him again. I sincerely believed all that time that he loved me, because during these twenty-five years he regularly wrote me and he never made me feel that anything had been changed regarding our future projects. His letters were full of the same good affection which I showed in mine.

He was seeing a great deal of the world during that time: Egypt, North Africa, Russia, India, the

two Americas. He travelled all over in company of Robinson's Soap. From time to time he would go through France, but in such haste that he never could find the necessary twenty-four hours to come to Givry and see "his wife." His wife! He still called me that in his letters. I answered always, "My dear husband."

II

Yesterday about two o'clock, as I was practising on my harmonium a piece that I was to play in church next Sunday, my little maid came to tell me that a lady wished to see me. She was an old friend of my parents who had become an important official in education, a general inspector in the public schools, I believe. She was going through Givry, glad to show her success to those who had known her as a young girl. We talked about half an hour, mentioning some people we had known mutually. Finally she said:

"Do you still hear about Monsieur Letertre?"

"Lucien Letertre?"

"Yes, the one who married in England and lives in Derbyshire."

I had strength enough left to answer:

"No, I have lost sight of him," and I asked a few details about Lucien, which she gave me in-

stantly. It seemed that only recently she had been sent to England to inspect the organization of manual schools, and that in passing through Derbyshire whom did she meet at Derby in the Robinson's Soap manufacture? My husband, Lucien Letertre, heir to old Robinson, a married man and father of three children.

When I was alone I cried a little, then I laughed at the old foolish woman that I have been to believe that a man remains faithful twenty-five years to a memory. It is true that to this memory I have given all my youth and some beauty which might have caught me a husband. I started to write to Lucien reproaching him, telling him of the uselessness of his letters. Then reflection stopped me. Thanks to this lie, I have been happy for twenty-five years. What might have been these years without this happy illusion in which Lucien kept me? Perhaps he knew that. That is probably what prevented him from telling me nine years ago, when he married, "My dear Adèle, you must no longer think about me."

I must be strong and not grieve too much. During twenty-five years I imagined that I was married; to-day I am a widow or divorced, that's all. I am thinking. He has three children. Suppose I should write him a good letter, very affectionate, and ask him to send to me one of his children, one

that I would raise and educate here, with not as much luxury as if at home in England, but like a little French boy, speaking the language of his father when he was in love with me. Truly, can Lucien refuse me that? Then to love and care for this little one would make me patiently wait for the road which leads from my house to my last rest.

These thoughts leave me quite cheerful. Come! old foolish Adèle Heudier, put on your spectacles and your best writing pen. Write to the heir of Robinson's Soap.

With a little kindness and courage one can overcome one's bad fortune. You will be a mother, as you have been a wife, in imagination!

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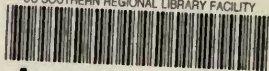
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